

## **“Top Ten” Resources for Undergraduate University Dorm Residents**

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When Tom Wolfe published his latest novel, *I am Charlotte Simmons*, a storm of articles followed concerning life for today’s undergraduate students. Mr. Wolfe did his research on campuses nationwide, but writers objected that no real college student has encountered the volume of rampant violence, wild drinking, and casual sex contained in the novel. Especially not while living on campus. Have they?

While the novel may exaggerate, a recent article in *Psychology Today* entitled “A Nation of Wimps” (Marano, 2004) points out that college students today are suffering mental health problems in record numbers. It is estimated that 15% percent of students nationwide are suffering from depression, while the number one student health concern has changed from relationship issues to anxiety. This psychological distress increasingly manifests itself in self-destructive behaviors such as binge drinking and self-mutilation. The cause of all this high anxiety is cited as hovering parents who have overscheduled their child’s life and protected the child from failure. This in turn has inhibited the child’s decision-making, communication, relationship, and leadership skills. The result is a generation of young adults who have trouble dealing with “real life.” Moving away from family and beginning college studies may subsequently create a crisis.

But with this crisis comes an opportunity for the student to learn self-awareness. The dormitory or residence hall provides frequent social interaction with peers, a degree of leisure time for reflection and introspection, and choices of activities to experience. Since much of this will be a significant change for modern students, they are likely to become aware of huge gaps in

their knowledge. The information needs of a college dorm student are great. Yet many of their needs cannot be satisfied in the classroom, or in an academic library whose materials primarily support course curriculum.

Group member Sarah Evans lived on the University of Washington campus for four years. For three of those years, she worked as a Resident Advisor in campus residence halls. Being intimately aware of the information needs of students in these halls, she began to consider about how these needs could be better met. She approached Sarah Lester and Robert Felthousen about the idea of developing a small reference library to be housed in a residence hall. These resources would go beyond homework support and into “life needs” support. The group contacted Derek Levy, an Area Coordinator for the UW Residence Halls. Mr. Levy gave us articles and resources that further informed us about the needs of today’s students.

Based on our knowledge and the lecture on user analysis, we broke the dorm students’ information needs into three areas: their activities and lifestyle, the decisions they make, and the kinds of problems they routinely face and need to solve. Under activity and lifestyle, we considered such weighty subjects as sexual health, sexual orientation, and substance use. We also considered information needs related to lighter topics such as movies, games, relationships, and social activities. As for decision-making, we considered information needs on topics such as religion, political beliefs, financial planning, and career guidance. For needs related to problem solving, we considered the how-to issues such as cooking and laundry care, as well as methods for time-management and more effective studies. We avoided specific curriculum support, since the University libraries traditionally fill that information need.

Our collection was selected based on its ability to provide support and resources to meet the students' information needs. By using the information provided to us by Mr. Levy, we

created a list of ten books we felt were essential to include in a residence hall library. The final list was culled from a huge selection, and was pared down by a number of factors. We chose books that were from well-known authors and/or reputable publishing houses, and targeted towards this age group. A number of the books we selected are backed by such organizations as Columbia University and the National Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Finance and Literacy. In addition to this collection, any good dorm residence hall library should have access to the Internet with links to such sites as:

- Go Ask Alice, a Columbia University Health Information Website targeted to college students (<http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu>);
- Coming Out Stories, a compilation of stories by high school and college age persons about coming out of the closet (<http://www.comingoutstories.com>);
- And a subscription to the Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center, which provides essays and articles from different sides of controversial issues (<http://www.galegroup.com/OpposingViewpoints/>).

For the college student finding themselves away from home and perhaps for the first time out from under the protective cover of their parent's watchful eye, some of the challenges put before them may be beyond their skills to comprehend. This collection was designed to provide the information they need and guidance to help them make an informed decision.

#### Work Cited

Marano, H. E. (2004). A nation of wimps. *Psychology Today*, 37(6), 58-70, 103.

## Bibliography

Bronson, H. & Riley, M. (2002). *How to heal a broken heart in 30 days : A day-by-day guide to saying good-bye and getting on with your life*. New York: Broadway Books. \$12.95.

This guide is written to help individuals with the grief and recovery process at the end of a relationship. Includes proven methods for getting over the relationship and moving on. A great source of information and comfort for healing after that first college relationship has ended.

Columbia University's Health Education Program (1998). *The Go Ask Alice book of answers: A guide to good physical, sexual, and emotional health*. New York : H. Holt. \$15.95

This book provides straightforward and comprehensive answers to many of the difficult and embarrassing questions that teens and adults have about various aspects of their health. Based on questions originally submitted to the Go Ask Alice website.

Duguay, D. (2001). *Please send money. A financial survival guide for young adults on their own*. Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks. \$16.95.

This guide, written by a money management expert, is designed to help people aged 16-25 manage their finances and avoid ending up in serious debt. Provides guidance and tools for managing credit cards, auto loans, and student loans.

Gilovich, P., Vogel, T., et.al. (2001). *The Stranger guide to Seattle: the city's smartest, pickiest, most obsessive urban manual*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books. \$16.95.

Covers topics of a traditional travel guide but with attitude, focusing on alternative, entertaining things to do in the city in a tone appealing to most young adults. Covers both “lowbrow” and “highbrow” lifestyles; section on drinking establishments, a

popular destination for college students, divided into dive bars, cool bars, and swank bars. Features photographs and essays about the city by Stranger writers and editors.

Gordon, L. D. (2004). *How to stay fit on the college meal plan and avoid the freshman fifteen*. Frederick, MD : PublishAmerica. \$12.95

An excellent resource for students who have never had to plan meals or think about nutrition. Guides students through meal choices, including snacks, party behavior, and vending machines. Intended for freshman, with narrow focus on avoiding new weight gain, but valuable for any dorm resident.

Jaffe, J. (ed.) (1995). *Encyclopedia of drugs and alcohol*. New York: MacMillan Library Reference USA. \$95.00 (out of print, used).

Four volume set covers physical and social aspects of drug and alcohol use. Intended for lay readers; appropriate for high school and college audiences. Despite age, entries on drugs and alcohol are comprehensive and informative. Includes information on treatment programs, activist groups, prevention and current research; may be out of date in some of these topics.

Marcus, E. (1999). *Is it a choice? Answers to 300 of the most frequently asked questions about gay and lesbian people*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco. \$14.95.

Excellent resource for audience of any gender or sexual preference. Addresses topics with first-person, non-judgmental answers; covers self-discovery, coming out, dating, families, work, military, and religion among others. Best used for general information; starting point for further discovery.

Martin, M., Porter, M., & Bang, D. (ed.) (2004). *DVD & video guide 2005*. New York: Ballantine Books. \$19.95.

Comprehensive movie guide updated annually. Includes feature films, b-movies, TV-movies and mini-series, as well as some TV series; each entry annotated with brief description, positives and/or negatives, and a rating. Index of directors and stars particularly useful; critics are fair and do not suffer from extreme points of view. Particularly useful in dormitory halls, since movie nights are a frequent activity.

Real U Guides series. (2004). Loganville, GA : Real U, Inc. \$89.50.

Abagnale, F. *Real U guide to identity theft.*

Abrams, L. *Real U guide to living on your own.*

Bodnyk, J. *Real U guide to buying your first car.*

Glink, K. *Real U guide to bank accounts & credit cards.*

Greenberg, P. *Real U guide to traveling on your own.*

Hassell, M. *Real U guide to your first job.*

Kavanah, M. *Real U guide to saving and investing.*

Overly, M. *Real U guide to planning for college.*

Stine, M. *Real U guide to road safety & car care.*

Stine, M. *Real U guide to your first apartment.*

Aimed at the teen and young adult audience. Visually stylish with essential information on “how-to” topics, and written in a language and format accessible to teen readers. Full-color with charts, photographs, and illustrations. Series covers many crucial topics for early adulthood which dormitory residents may not have information about; guides for saving and investing, identity theft, and traveling are written by experts in the field.

Rooks, C. D., & Santos, R. A. (2002). *The quick college guide: Reading, writing, and studying*. New York : Longman, 2002. \$23.80.

Basic handbook in skills students may not have learned effectively in high school; topics include note- and test-taking, research and documentation skills, collaborative learning, and evaluating authority of on-line resources. Material presented sequentially for ease of use. Intended for apprehensive college students, but can be used by students of any academic proficiency.