

Quick (but great) reads for busy students

The Camel Bookmobile, M. Hamilton. (2007). New York: Harper Collins. Get it at: [Inforum 813.6 H321C](#)

Fiona Sweeney, a 36-year-old New York librarian, sets out to make a difference in the world and volunteers to help with an interesting bookmobile project happening in Kenya. However, while some of the villagers excitedly wait for the bookmobile's visits, not everyone is thrilled with the program. The elders see the access to 'outsider' knowledge and information as a threat to tradition and the preservation of their way of life. And when the only rule of the bookmobile is broken and books get stolen, the continuation of the program is in jeopardy. The novel allows readers to engage in a wonderfully written story while gaining greater insight into the issues that crop up with the global shift towards the information society and information economy from the perspective of other cultures that may not wholeheartedly embrace it. Also great for those wishing to delve deeper into the topic of how professionals can help or do harm.

The Breadwinner, D. Ellis. (2000). Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre. Get it at: [OISE JUV FIC E47B](#)

When 11-year-old Parvana's father is arrested because of his foreign education, her family is forced to map out a new way of life. Without any men in the family to support them, and women prohibited from earning money, Parvana is forced to masquerade as a boy to become the breadwinner of the family. This first installment of the breadwinner trilogy is a quick read and, despite its classification as a children's book, is filled with decidedly grown-up themes. This book is a wonderful choice for those who are interested in the discussion of underlying issues such as gender and poverty inequities that are obscured by the divide. The novel also works to flesh out the question of whether or not an equal playing field is even possible and lends itself to discussions surrounding sexism as related to the divide. If you enjoyed this book, check out the next two in the trilogy: *Parvana's Journey* and *Mud City*.

Great Memoirs...

My Posse Don't Do Homework, L. Johnson. (1992). New York: St. Martin's Press. Get it at: [OISE 371.10092 J67my](#)

In this autobiography, ex-marine LouAnne Johnson tells the story of her time as a teacher at an inner-city high school in California. From the dilapidated classroom furniture to the vastly outdated textbooks, Johnson doesn't skimp on the nitty-gritty details as she takes readers through her failures and triumphs in trying to take students at risk of falling through the cracks under her wing and educate them with the limited resources offered by the administration. Through the unorthodox methods she employs in the classroom and taking the time to connect with her students, Johnson tries to get her students on the right path and on track for success. Although written in the early 90s, many of the themes found within the book still resonate today, highlighting the divides that still exist and the role of the state in bridging the gap. A great read for students interested in the topic of ICTs and marginalized populations. The book was also adapted into the film *Dangerous Minds* starring Michelle Pfeiffer, pick it up at the [Media Commons RC454.4 .D35 2002](#)

Reading Lolita in Tehran, A. Nafisi. (2004). New York: Random House. Get it at: [Inforum 820.9 N146R](#)

Set in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a teacher gathers a few of her female students every Thursday morning to read forbidden Western literature. Nafisi's memoir tells the tale of her covert teaching sessions in the face of fundamentalist oppression. Along the way, readers will become enchanted with the women as they shed their veils and engage in classic reads that embolden their spirits and spur debates and conversations about the world they live in. This memoir encompasses many of the course issues in a work of beautiful prose that will have readers both following the narrative and, for those interested in the divide as it exists outside of North American liberties, questioning how it operates in other societies. Great read for those who question the idea of universal access as a universal solution and once again addresses the question of who benefits from the divide and who decides.

RA Guide for INF2221: Digital divides and information professionals: Developing a critical practice

The Digital Divide...

Looking to gain a little more insight on the issues presented by the digital divide? Well then this is the guide for you! Plenty of fiction and non-fiction, touching on course themes and available right here, on campus, are offered for your enjoyment.



Created by Nicole Miller

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What If.....

Air: Or, Have Not Have, G. Ryman. (2005). London: Gollancz. Get it at: [Robarts PR6068 .Y53 A57 2005](#)

What if everyone on the planet had access to endless amounts of information no matter their location or status? Such a world is created in Ryman's novel, wherein the UN decides to test a drastic new communication technology called 'Air.' It works to implant a system much like the Internet in everyone's brain, bypassing the need for wires, connections, and machines. When the system is tested on a small village, protagonist Chung Mae, a local fashion expert, gets trapped in the system. Throughout the novel readers follow her journey as she struggles to prepare everyone for the changes ahead while becoming sadly aware that the way of life in her small village will never be the same. A fantastic, fast-paced read for both sci-fi and non-sci-fi readers alike, the novel offers plenty of food for thought about whether and how the divide would operate in such a world. Also a great choice for students interested in the topic of the democratization of information and communication technologies.

Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World, H. Murakami. (1993). New York: Vintage Books. Get it at: [UofT Schools SC MUR](#)

What if information was the greatest possessions one could own? In this novel set in futuristic Tokyo, there is a raging information war, with both sides seeking the upper hand. The narrator/protagonist who remains nameless, finds himself caught up in the battle and works for an organization controlling the flow of information via dubious methods which puts him at odds with himself. The novel takes readers through a set of parallel stories and, along the journey, presents a myriad of themes including the ownership, control, and perceptions of reality while offering a birds-eye view into a society where information and technology have become the be all and end all of existence. Both dedicated and new readers of Murakami's work review this novel as another of his literary achievements and highly recommend it for those looking for something original.

Digital Divide and Dystopia

Fahrenheit 451, R. Bradbury. (1967). New York: Simon and Schuster. Get it at: [Robarts PS3503 .R16 F3 1967](#)

In this dystopian society, literature is on its way to extinction while the television rules. Fireman Guy Montag is tasked with destroying the most illegal possessions one can own: books. However, after witnessing an old woman's resolve to burn with her books, Montag starts to question his role. Although extreme, the novel is great for those interested in the discussion of ownership, censorship, public opinion and the role of decision-makers. Similarly, the novel highlights the proliferation of technology in society. In a TV-dominated society where people are content with getting all of their information from the television, the novel is also fantastic for readers looking to further identify what kinds of positive and negative effects the introduction of information and communication technologies can have on society. Also available as film on DVD at the [Media Commons VideoDVD 750619](#)

Mila 18, L. Uris. (1961). Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday. Get it at: [Robarts PS3541 .R435 M5](#)

The year is 1943, and the Jews confined within the walls of the Warsaw Ghetto are planning to stage a revolt against their German oppressors. Uris intricately weaves together the experiences of a number of individuals trying to negotiate life under the German regime, from a disenchanting reporter in love with a married Jewess, to the leader of a Zionist organization. Extreme in its premise, through its multiple references to the Nazi propaganda machine, the novel illuminates the idea of information as a powerful, influential tool. Uris does not hold back in painting vivid, often-painful pictures, making the narrative a hauntingly poignant example of the power of information and the importance of ownership and control. This book is excellent for those interested in examining the power and repercussions of information policies that privilege certain groups over others.

Social Exclusion and Social Capital

The Help, K. Stockett. (2009). New York: Amy Einhorn Books. Get it at: [University College PS3619 .T636 H45 2009](#)

In deep south Mississippi during the 1960s, a new policy created by the white upper class socialite women in town regarding their African-American maids sets into motion a project, the likes of which have never been seen before. It is a tell-all book, penned by one of the socialites and detailing the treatment of the maids and daily happenings in the households they work for. All the more remarkably, the story is told by maids themselves. A touching storyline, along with the charm and wit of the characters, will have readers hooked in an instant. This book is a great read for those interested in learning more about the concept of social exclusion, as discussed in the course, as many parallels can be drawn between social exclusion portrayed in the novel and the social exclusion of today, induced by the digital divide. The book has also been made into a film, you can pick up the DVD at the [Media Commons VideoDVD 757753](#)

The Accidental Billionaires: The founding of Facebook, a tale of sex, money, genius and betrayal, B. Mezrich. (2010). New York: Anchor Books. Get it at: [UofT schools 006.754 MEZ](#)

If you're interested in learning about the origins of Facebook, then this is the book for you. Mezrich takes readers through the creation of Facebook from its roots as a system used for rating females on the Harvard campus to its transformation into the company often touted for revolutionizing the Internet. This novel is a great read for those interested in information capital and an excellent choice for students wanting to further delve into the world of dot.com millionaires. Alternatively, watch *The Social Network*, starring Jesse Eisenberg as Mark Zuckerberg chronicling the story of Facebook.

Get it at the [Media Commons VideoDVD 756617](#)