Logan, Utah, makes top-10 (we’re #3!) list of best college towns in U.S. | Journalism

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This is exactly how gossip and rumor and “rankings” work in both academe and the “information age,” but I’ll play along. Why not?

The Chronicle of Higher Education—that stalwart standard for colleges and universities—has succumbed like everyone/everything else to blogging and tweeting and gossip of all sorts. (Well, that’s unfair: academics have always been great and petty gossips, a tradition going back for—well, I’d pick an arbitrary span, but the academic nitpickers would tear me up.)

Tuesday’s Chronicle of Higher Ed website reports that Logan, Utah—has anyone heard of it?—ranks No. 3 nationwide in a new survey.

It’s a ranking/poll/survey/or something by a “publication” called Livability—an outfit that the Chronny reporter, Scott Carlson, has never heard of (his exact quote, which is amazing: “I’m not saying the list is definitive—it’s put together by a publication called Livability, which I have never heard of.” This is fine, because I’ve never heard of the part of The Chronicle of Higher Education that Carlson works for: “Buildings and Grounds.” Who knew?)

The unbylined Livability piece, “Top 10 college towns 2012,” says the point of its “survey” was to highlight the complementary nature of campuses and the towns where they reside. “We consulted with Robert Franek, senior vice president, publisher and author of Princeton Review’s recently released 21st edition Best Colleges guidebook.” [Note: the Livability people make that a hot link, but we decline to provide promotion without a good reason, or at least compensation. Look it up for yourself.]

They go on to say the “key factors” of a “great college town” include “location, weather and public transportation; a beautiful environment; friendly people; access to and availability of career opportunities; fun things to do off campus; and good college-community relations.”

Other factors in Livability’s ranking: “We also looked for towns where it’s clear the college is a big economic player . . . [also] impacting the strength and diversity of the city’s retail sector . . . [and] the reason for more plentiful shops, restaurants and entertainment businesses, most geared to younger people and academics.”

The Chronicle’s Buildings and Grounds’ Carlson adds: “And it has to look like a college town, too: It doesn’t seem right to call a place a college town if you can’t tell classes are in session with a quick glance at the mix of people on a busy sidewalk."

[Gratuitous editorial comment expurgated.]

Tops on Livability’s list, two ahead of Logan, is College Station, Texas, home of Texas A&M (Go Aggies!). Next is Oxford, Miss. [Gratuitous editorial comment only partially expurgated: I have been to both college towns, and most of the rest on the list, but . . . . . ] Others on the top 10 include other really nice towns. Logan—says Livability—beats out the homes of the universities of Michigan and Indiana and Illinois and Georgia and others. Who could deny it?

“As you know, we here at The Chronicle’s Buildings & Grounds blog are not big believers in ‘best’ or ‘top 10’ lists. But . . . I couldn’t resist passing it along,” Carlson says.

Me, too. Here’s the list:

1. College Station, Tex.
2. Oxford, Miss.
3. Logan, Utah
4. Champaign, Ill.
5. Lawrence, Kan.
6. Corvallis, Ore.
7. Bloomington, Ind.

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