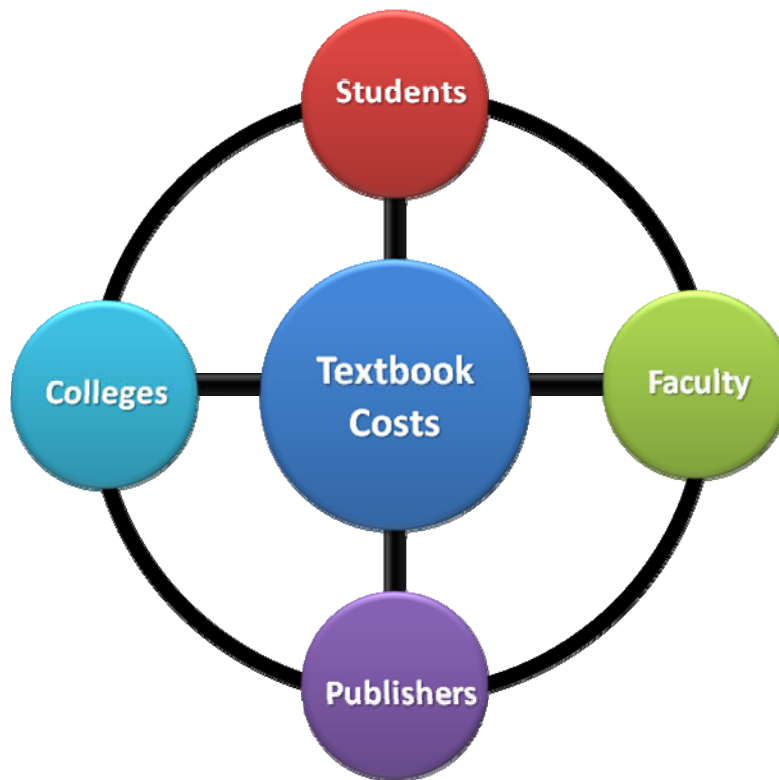


HOW DO YOU HOLD A MOONBEAM IN YOUR HAND*?:

Getting a Grip on Textbook Prices



Report from the Alternative Course Materials Task Force

Tulsa Community College

December 2009

*Hammerstein, Oscar II. "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria." *The Sound of Music*. 1959

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INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Education and the American Dream

Although it has not been precisely defined, most Americans have an idea of what the “American Dream” is and how it relates to being an American. Implicit in the dream are ample opportunities for success and the expectation that hard work will be rewarded. While the dream has many components, education has been considered one of its pillars, essential for both self-improvement and upward mobility. As early as 1817, Thomas Jefferson “developed an elaborate plan for making education available to every citizen, and for providing a complete education through university for talented youths who were unable to afford it” (“Jefferson”).

Submitted as a legislative proposal in his home state of Virginia, Jefferson’s plan called for every householder to be within three miles of an elementary school. Higher education was divided into two levels. District colleges would serve as the local access point for a higher education. These colleges would be within a “day’s ride” and would provide basic education. The modern community college seems close to what Jefferson envisioned as a district college. The second level of his proposal was the university. This two-part system was, for those “whose parents are too poor to give them further education, to be carried at the public expense through the colleges and university” (“Jefferson”).

Of his bill, Jefferson wrote, “The object [was] to bring into action that mass of talents which lies buried in poverty in every country for want of the means of development, and thus give activity to a mass of mind which in proportion to our population shall be the double or treble of what it is in most countries,” and “The general objects are to provide an education adapted to the years, to the capacity, and the condition of every one, and directed to their freedom and happiness” (qtd. in “Jefferson”). Two key points in Jefferson’s educational plan are accessibility and affordability. Over the years, developments such as community colleges and, more recently, the introduction of electronically delivered “distance learning” clearly served Jefferson’s objective to offer reasonable access to a “district college within a day’s ride.” The question of affordability, however, has been a struggle that entails more than simply the cost of tuition and fees. The

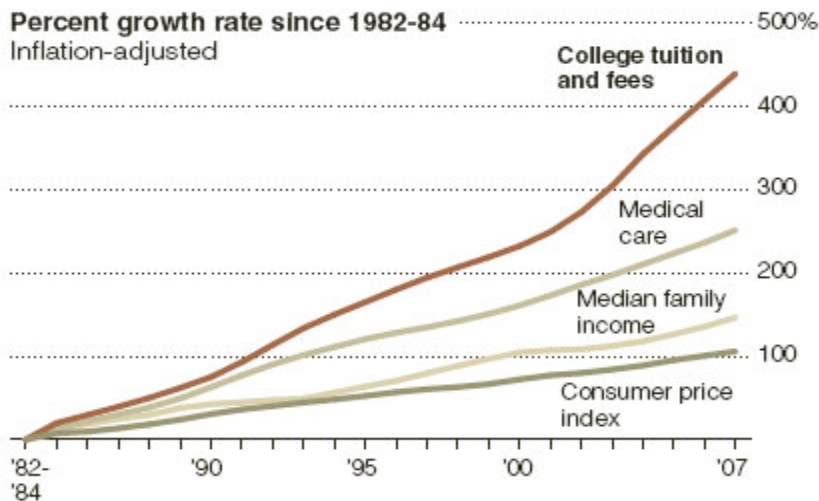
current costs of a college education should encourage society to assess how many individuals have the opportunity to pursue an affordable college education.

What is the Cost of a College Degree?

Part of the problem in determining the price of a college degree is a lack of consistent data; however, even though statistical reports on education and textbook cost increases vary somewhat depending on the source, most show that the increases in the costs of education and of textbooks have significantly outpaced the Consumer Price Index (United States, [Turn 5](#); United States, [College Textbooks 2-3](#)). Moreover, all of the reports confirm that the cost of a college education is increasing at an alarming rate. The following chart from the [New York Times](#) (“Soaring”) clearly illustrates this trend:

Soaring College Tuitions

College tuition continues to outpace median family income and the cost of medical care, food and housing.



Net college costs as a percentage of median family income*

INCOME CATEGORY	FOUR-YEAR PUBLIC		TWO-YEAR PUBLIC	
	1999-2000	2007-8	1999-2000	2007-8
Lowest	39%	55%	40%	49%
Lower-middle	23	33	22	29
Middle	18	25	15	20
Upper-middle	12	16	10	13
Highest	7	9	6	7

Note: Net college costs are tuition and room and board minus financial aid.

Source: "Measuring Up 2008," the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

According to another report, conducted by the U. S. Government Accountability Office in 2005,

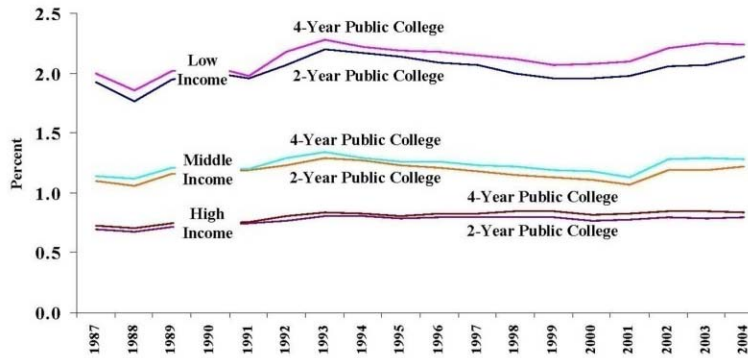
In the last two decades, college textbook prices have increased at twice the rate of inflation but have followed close behind tuition increases. Increasing at an average of 6 percent per year, textbook prices nearly tripled from December 1986 to December 2004, while tuition and fees increased by 240 percent and overall inflation was 72 percent. At 2-year public institutions, where low-income students are more likely to pursue a degree program and tuition and fees are lower, the average estimated cost of books and supplies per first-time, full-time student was \$886 in academic year 2003-2004, representing almost three-quarters of the cost of tuition and fees” (United States, College Textbooks 2-3).

The rapid increase in tuition during the last decade led Congress to seek detailed information about the impact this increase was having on the nation. More students are opting to attend community colleges as opposed to regional colleges or universities, but, as the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported in 2007, “many have expressed concerns that college is becoming less affordable for a growing number of students and their families” (Turn 2-3). The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, which since 2000 has been issuing annual “report cards” assessing and comparing the states’ educational performance on each of several indicators, is among those voices. The Center’s Measuring Up 2006 report noted, “The nation’s colleges and universities have become less affordable for students and their families since the early 1990s. This year, no states received an ‘A’ or a ‘B’ in this category, and 43 states flunked, reflecting the deterioration of college affordability” (13). The 2008 report card presented a picture that was bleaker still; only one state (California, with a ‘C’) did not receive an ‘F’ in affordability. The report added, “Although many states increased their investment in need-based financial aid, tuition increases outpaced growth in financial aid” (National Center 15, 18).

Affordability must be judged not only on the raw data representing cost increases, but also on how those increases relate to family income and availability of financial assistance. According to the United States Advisory Committee Report on Financial Aid, Turn the Page, “Overall, expenses for textbooks stated as a percent of family income have been trending upward, but only

very slightly” (7). For students in the lowest quartile of family income, textbook expenses as a percentage of family income grew slightly from 2.0 percent to 2.2 percent from 1987 to 2004.

**TEXTBOOK EXPENSES
AS A PERCENT OF FAMILY INCOME
1987 TO 2004**

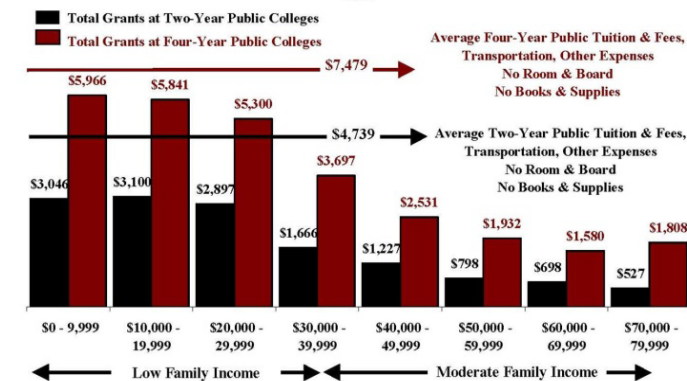


Source: Analysis of data from the College Board Annual Survey of Colleges and Postsecondary Education Opportunity, Bachelor's Degree Attainment by Age 24 by Family Income Quartiles, 1970 - 2004.

Similar slight trends upward can be seen for middle- and high-income students in the figure (above) taken from Turn the Page (8).

Although it might appear that the increase represents a small percentage of family income, there is one more factor to be considered in the affordability issue: insufficiency of financial aid in the form of grants. The following figure, also taken from Turn the Page (8), makes it quite clear that total grants at two-year colleges are insufficient to meet the average \$4,739 price tag associated with tuition, fees, transportation, and other expenses at two-year institutions. That figure does not include the costs of books, supplies, room and board.

**TOTAL GRANT AID AND COLLEGE EXPENSES
2004**



Source: Analysis of data from the College Board Annual Survey of Colleges and Postsecondary Education Opportunity, Financial Aid Packaging for Full-Time, Full-Year, One Institution, Dependent Undergraduate Students

This shortfall represents a significant threat to accessibility and persistence for students in low- to middle-income ranges who must carry heavier work- or debt-loads to manage the unmet financial need. This frustrates students who are struggling, as expressed by a first-generation college student from Texas: “How do you expect students to come to school when they are cutting our funding and we don't have a way to pay to come to school? I don't understand that. Or even with the books. ‘Come to school, come to school.’ OK, so maybe you get money to pay tuition, but how are you supposed to pay \$500 for your books?” (qtd. in Engle 34).

In the following example, a student enrolled in 16 credit hours at Tulsa Community College could expect to pay more than \$580 for the semester’s required textbooks. Because the availability of used textbooks is not to be relied upon, the example assumes the student purchases new textbooks for each course. Further, in determining the book costs below, the task force examined the prices of all textbooks in use among the various sections of a given course at TCC and incorporated into the example the median price for each course.

Example: Textbook Costs for a Freshman Enrolled in 16 Credit Hours (Spring 2008)

Course	Credit Hours	Tuition / Fees	Textbooks
Algebra	3	\$260.85	\$117.60
Composition I	3	\$260.85	\$139.33
Chemistry	4	\$359.80	\$123.60
Government	3	\$260.85	\$113.50
Economics	3	<u>\$260.85</u>	<u>\$87.70</u>
Totals	16	<u>\$1,403.20</u>	<u>\$581.73</u>

In this case, the cost of textbooks represents 29% of the student’s instructional costs (excluding related transportation and living expenses) for a single semester. The costs of textbooks could differ significantly based on the individual student’s class schedule and depending on the specific textbooks associated with specific course sections. For the government course listed above, prices for new textbooks ranged from \$48 to \$134. The price is dependent on the following variables: faculty textbook selection process; the publisher’s willingness to negotiate the price of the textbook; and college policies concerning textbook adoptions.

Textbooks are still commonly required in most college courses. Surveys conducted by Harris Interactive and commissioned by Nebraska Book Company in 2005 indicated that 94% of faculty members require a textbook in their courses and 81% believe the textbook to be integral to the course. Most faculty and half of the students surveyed envisioned that the textbook would remain important in college courses. The same report indicates that while 85% of students believe that new textbooks cost far too much, 87% intend to comply with the textbook recommendation of the professor. Approximately half of the students surveyed indicated that the financial burden of buying books and supplies was very difficult to meet. To save money, students commonly seek to purchase used textbooks, especially for general education courses when they don't plan to keep the book (Harris). Unfortunately, 59% of students report that at some time they have been unable to find a used textbook for any of their classes (Rube 8). A July 2004 survey by eBay revealed that 43% of students simply forgo purchasing one or more textbooks because of cost (Rube 4). Students may choose to share a book with a classmate, purchase an older edition, or rely on a library copy of a book. Each of these strategies has the potential to negatively affect the student's ability to succeed in a course.

The majority of all college students (63%) report that they would not be able to attend college if they did not work (Rube 4). First-generation college students generally choose to work rather than take out loans (Engle 7), and half of all students purchase their textbooks without loans or assistance from parents (Rube 4). These burdens affect a student's ability to focus on academics. Another first-generation college student states: "I work two jobs and go to school and it's hard, real hard. I go to school early in the morning and right after work I go home at like 9:00 or 10:00, and I'm too tired to do my homework" (qtd. in Engle 36). It is not difficult to understand why these pressures substantially reduce a student's ability to persist in college.

How many potential students have reached a financial barrier that prohibits them from attending or completing college? In 2006, the United States Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance reported,

We have failed to take accurate account of the impact of price barriers on our lowest income students, especially those who have prepared and planned for college. During the 1990s, between nearly 1 million and 1.6 million bachelor's degrees were lost among

college-qualified high school graduates from low- and moderate-income families. Between 1.4 million and 2.4 million more bachelor's degrees will likely be lost, as the number of high school graduates increases and academic preparation improves (Mortgaging iii).

What are the options for reducing the high costs of textbooks?

To address the problem of textbook costs, the various constituencies, or stakeholders, associated with course materials must be identified, and the role of each constituency should be defined in relationship to potential solutions. There are at minimum four major constituencies: 1) students; 2) faculty; 3) book publishers, authors, and vendors; and 4) colleges. Because of differences in viewpoints and objectives, the recommendations for action will be significantly different from one constituency to the next. Furthermore, each constituency comprises factions that are not necessarily unified in a way that can lead them to embrace a common solution to the problem.

Options exist that may offer lower textbook costs for students or provide workable alternatives to traditional textbooks. Most of these are considered in greater detail in the pages that follow.

Some of the most frequently considered possibilities include the following:

1. Rental textbooks
2. Commercial electronic textbooks
3. Custom textbooks
4. Negotiated pricing
5. Extended edition cycle
6. Internet sites
7. Open textbooks (e.g., Creative Commons license)
8. Online book swap (student clearinghouse)
9. Tax-free textbooks
10. College store policy changes (e.g., at-cost textbook sales, nonprofit campus stores)
11. Intellectual content licenses

These options raise different concerns from different groups, and because no single alternative satisfies the concerns of all affected constituencies, this report's purpose is not to offer one

solution to this complex problem. Instead, its aim is to identify the major concerns of each stakeholder group and subgroup, present a more detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the options and proposals available, and examine alternatives as they relate to the primary purpose of course materials: to enhance learning.

In the pages that follow, this report will consider these constituencies in the following order: students; faculty (both full and part time); institutions (including not only administration and governing bodies but also campus stores); textbook publishers; and authors. Outside vendors and college libraries are not studied in depth in this report, but the Tulsa Community College Alternative Course Materials Task Force recognizes that future dialogues about the textbook topic should take into account these important constituencies.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Survey any group of students, and most are bound to agree that “less is more” when it comes to the cost of textbooks for their courses. If monetary cost were the only consideration, this issue might be solved relatively easily. However, many educators believe that a quality textbook is--or should be--a tool that has intrinsic and lasting value as part of the learning process. The question is whether students share their professors’ point of view. In addressing the problem of textbook costs, the intangible worth of the textbook to the learning process must be balanced with the price in order to maximize the value to students. This section of the report will consider both aspects of the problem, focusing always on the goals of improving student access to and persistence in education and, ultimately, helping students learn.

Student Strategies for Reducing Textbook Costs

Student groups studying textbook pricing maintain that publishers have been driving prices upward faster than the rate of inflation without a gain in quality sufficient to justify the increase. The Campaign to Reduce the Cost of College Textbooks is a joint effort of several state-level student research groups across the country. These groups, called PIRGs (Public Interest Research Groups), are run and funded by students in 20 states on more than 200 college campuses.

In 2004, the California Student Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG) released the first edition of Merriah Fairchild's report Ripoff 101: How the Current Practices of the Textbook Industry Drive Up the Cost of College Textbooks. The practices receiving the most blame in the report were bundling textbooks with ancillary materials and releasing new editions every 3.8 years, on average. The student researchers asserted that books published online only could be produced and updated much more cheaply, as "paper, printing, and editorial costs" are responsible for "an average of 32.3 cents of every dollar of the textbook cost—the largest share of the total" (Fairchild 5). (CALPIRG failed to note that "editorial costs," including editing, record-keeping, and other labor, would not be shed in an online format.) The report's recommendations included the following steps for publishers to take:

1. always making bundled items available for purchase separately,
2. passing on to students cost savings from online textbooks,
3. disclosing more information about texts (costs, bundling/unbundling, specific changes from previous edition, length of time before the next new edition) to faculty who are selecting textbooks,
4. keeping each textbook on the market "as long as possible without sacrificing the educational content," and
5. producing supplements and addenda instead of completely new editions.

The CALPIRG report also recommended that faculty choose the cheapest acceptable alternative when selecting textbooks, and that colleges and universities invest in book rental programs and online book swaps.

Students themselves already seek the cheapest acceptable alternative when purchasing textbooks, and many have developed strategies for finding less expensive texts. While first-time students may be more inclined to purchase books at the campus bookstore, experienced students are more apt to seek other sources for books, such as swapping with friends, renting textbooks, or shopping at online sellers. As they gain experience in college, some students may decide not to acquire books at all. However, almost half of students prefer to buy their textbooks, whether used or new, in a traditional college bookstore rather than online. The reasons for this are not clear: some students may depend on the campus bookstore because the cost of books can be charged

against financial aid, while others may prefer the campus bookstore for convenience and timely availability of books.

Students also may have the option of selling back their books at the end of the semester, which effectively reduces the cost of the books. However, most students are often very dissatisfied with the amount they receive for their books, or frustrated when they discover that the book has become obsolete so the bookstore has chosen not to buy it at all. In general, students would prefer to pay less up front for textbooks, which are generally purchased around the same time that a whopping tuition bill must be paid. Students would participate in book buy-back more fully if they had advance information about the buy-back prices (Harris).

Whatever their individual choices, students realize they have little power as individuals or as a group to affect the larger textbook market. From an economics standpoint, the textbook market is relatively “price inelastic,” meaning that even large changes in the prices of textbooks result in only very small changes in the demand for the product. “The price elasticity of demand for textbooks has been measured to be as low as -0.2, which means that a ten percent increase in textbook prices will cause only a two percent decline in the number of textbooks purchased” (Koch 4). Similar studies of consumers at bookstores such as Barnes and Noble or Amazon.com estimate the price elasticity of demand for a broader range of book types to be -3.5: a ten percent increase in price yields a 35% decrease in sales (Koch 4). As noted earlier, Harris Poll statistics indicate most students will try to comply with a professor’s choice of required or recommended textbooks, even when the price increases. This places students in the vulnerable position of being captive to the choices of the professor who selects the textbook and to the price policies of the textbook publishers. Rarely does a market in the United States operate in this manner; it bears strong resemblance to the market for prescription drugs, where pharmaceutical firms set prices, doctors prescribe the drugs, and patients have little choice but to make the purchases as prescribed (Koch 2). This situation does nothing to control the pricing of products, and has the potential to exacerbate the problem. In effect, the market is “broken” (United States Turn 9).

Intrinsic Value of Textbook: Can Students and Professors Agree?

Although our discussion is directed toward reducing prices of textbooks for students, it is important to bear in mind the value that textbooks or other course materials have in the learning process. The textbook has been seen for ages as an essential tool for learning in college courses; in general, a textbook gathers into a single package many resources to support the instructor's teaching and the student's learning. Pedagogical reasons for choosing textbooks and course materials will be discussed in more depth in another section of this report; this section is concerned primarily with the perception of value by students (and professors, to some degree). Students participating together with faculty, authors, and publisher representatives in a 2004 textbook forum at Queen's University in Ontario indicated that value of a textbook trumped price as their first priority. "What was an interesting surprise is that students said price is not such a big deal if the material they purchase is necessary and will be used in class," according to Chris Tabor, Queen's University bookstore manager and forum organizer (Christopher 2).

Robert Brooker, professor of genetics at University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and author of both a genetics textbook and a biology textbook, wrote in an article for insidehighered.com that students should view their college education as a long-term investment, and that textbooks are but a small part of the investment. According to Brooker, the development of a well-designed science textbook, with consistent pedagogical features that make it student-friendly, can cost as much as \$2.5 million dollars. This includes collaboration and consultation with faculty members across the world about content, research, editing, sophisticated artwork and photography, and digital media ancillaries. Brooker gauges the cost of textbooks at 7% of the cost of a college education, and he estimates the value added to the student's education through the use of textbooks to be as much as 50%, although he does not provide supporting evidence for that number.

His article provoked a stream of negative comments by readers, including the following from students:

- The value of a textbook cannot be used to justify its cost. Students can only take advantage of the value if they can afford to buy it.
- The main annoyance is when students buy textbooks that are subsequently not required as essential texts. These books would be better placed in optional reading lists. I've seen some livid students after wasteful purchases. The anger grows if the unnecessary book happens to be written by their tutor, making the purchase feel like a sneaky way to increase the author's sales/royalties.
- I am referring to more than the textbook just being "required" as reading. Most students find that even "required" reading isn't entirely necessary, especially if you're already doing well in a class. The textbook needs to be actively referenced, explored in class, discussed, and USED. And that is up to the professor. A professor who builds a conversation around the textbook and puts it to use in the classroom will make the most out of the cost.

As these responses indicate, students have strong feelings about being forced to purchase expensive textbooks. Often, students do not develop an appreciation of the long-term value of books for personal and professional enrichment until later in life, much to the dismay of their professors. Certainly the failure to actively integrate the textbook into a course diminishes its immediate value to the student and is one of the big frustrations of students, who will often choose not to purchase a textbook until they determine how and whether it will be used in a class.

Podolevsky and Finkelstein confirm that students and professors do not assign similar values to physics textbooks (341). This study of four introductory physics courses at different levels (two calculus-based, one algebra-based, and one conceptual course), with different instructors and different textbooks, found that 97% of students purchased the textbook but only 41% read it on a regular basis. While conventional wisdom leads most instructors to suggest in the syllabus that students who read the textbook in preparing for lecture will perform better overall in a course, this study found that across all four courses, most of the subjects did not read the book but their performance in the course did not suffer compared to those few who did read the book before lecture (Podolevsky and Finkelstein 341) Similar results were found for organic chemistry students in another study, but among general

chemistry students, those self-reporting higher hours of using the textbook actually received lower course grades (Smith 101). For the algebra- and calculus-based physics courses, there was no correlation between reading and course grade; in the conceptual physics course, there was moderate correlation (Podolevsky and Finkelstein 341). Students reported that reading the book was useful in doing homework, but less so in studying for exams, which depended more on material from the lectures. The low percentage of students who read their textbooks regularly certainly suggests that they do not place a high value on reading as an intellectual activity. Students, therefore, may have good reasons for not sharing their professors' view of the textbook. If the text does not seem to or actually does not improve their performance in a class, it isn't surprising that they resent paying high prices for texts.

Several studies, however, have demonstrated that students value some pedagogical aids that textbooks provide. Ease of finding information in a text is enhanced by features such as bold-faced technical terms, glossaries, and indices, according to the studies. Chapter summaries and self-tests rank high in usefulness for review and studying for exams. In courses that are closely related to a student's major, up-to-date material and practical examples may enhance student perception of relevance to the student's future career (Rich 30). Ranking of learning aids in a 1999 study by Weiten, et al., involving university, community college, and high school students agreed well with the study by Rich, et al., more than a decade earlier. In the Weiten study, community college students were more likely to use learning aids than either university students or high school students. There was little evidence that the use of learning aids had any correlation to better grades (Weiten et al. 21). When comparing the reports of Weiten and Rich with more recent papers (Dake, Lutz and Wamser, Podolevsky and Finkelstein) about student preferences concerning textbooks and learning aids, it seems remarkable that student preferences for textbook features seem to have changed little over the last twenty years, in spite of vast changes in technology and learning environments.

A significant feature in these reports is that the findings had characteristics that were unexpected or surprising to the faculty members compiling the information. Some professors have involved students in the task of helping to select a textbook for adoption (e. g., Lutz and Wamser, Dake). In both examples, the faculty members screened the available textbooks and pre-selected a group of textbooks that would be satisfactory candidates for adoption, then

presented students with well-structured guidelines for evaluating the books. Students considered a variety of characteristics such as cost, size and weight of the book, writing style, types of problems and examples, and layout of the text. In both cases, the faculty members reported being very pleased with the serious manner in which students undertook the evaluations. In both situations, the textbooks recommended by the students were adopted for future classes. Although Dake mentioned that cost was of primary concern to her students in selecting a book, the students were sufficiently enthusiastic about their final choice that they asked her to order it even if it was not available in a cheaper paperback edition. Lutz and Wamser concluded that this method of textbook selection “opened their eyes to what was important from the students’ point of view,” and they recommended this method for selecting a textbook for adoption. Dake also reported a marked increase in student satisfaction with the student-selected textbook over the following three years compared to books she had adopted previously. Although ancillary materials were not evaluated by the students of Lutz and Wamser, Dake reported that “surprising to me, the ancillary materials such as CDs, websites, and study guides were generally not used or valued” by her students in their evaluations (418).

Clearly, features that are valued by students and those valued by faculty members differ. Relatively few reports of this sort, documenting instances in which students were actually consulted about what they would value and find useful, exist, and perhaps it is time for faculty members to set aside pedagogical prejudices in favor of research into what actually works to improve learning for the student.

Student Preferences in Technology

Some suggest that one way to reduce costs for students would be to use digital resources in lieu of traditional textbooks. Typical e-books are priced lower than traditional hardcopy textbooks, and professors can self-publish notes and course materials to a course management system or design their courses using “free” materials available on the Internet. It may be especially tempting to look for technological solutions to the textbook cost problem, given that many college students are “digital natives” and given the promise of nearly unlimited flexibility in designing a collection of resources for a course. Will students (or professors, for that matter)

embrace the idea of replacing traditional textbooks with digital materials to reduce cost? It might be wise to return to the notion that student perception of value in learning materials seems to trump cost and find out what students think. Yet, surprisingly few studies have examined how students perceive and use textbooks and other course materials.

An exploratory case study performed by Hoffer and Salisbury at a Midwestern, private university involved the use of an e-textbook in a business economics course with students of traditional college age, most of whom were not economics majors. The electronic textbook was provided to students on a CD, along with access to the publisher's companion Web site; 38% of the students in the course reported that they had used some type of electronic textbook previously. The course was taught by a professor who based in-class sessions primarily on his own lecture notes, developed independently of any particular textbook over the course of 40 years of teaching. In class, the professor rarely referred to the e-book, leaving the students to choose whether or not to use it. This was not unlike his approach to using a traditional textbook in previous semesters. While students reported some positive features of the e-book, more than half indicated that they did not use the e-book at all. The professor's reputation held that his lectures and notes were the most valuable resources for succeeding in the course; moreover, using the electronic book was laborious and interfered with multi-tasking while studying, and students felt overwhelmed by the amount of material given to them with little guidance on how best to use it. "The students we studied were practically begging for focus, consistency, integration, and guidance for the learning resources, including an e-book, available to them" (Hoffer and Salisbury 224). Although exploratory in nature, the study strongly supports the importance of integrating course materials into the intentional design of a course if students are to benefit from them. The authors further call for more research into the relationship between technological advances and the social systems in which they are used, if they are to be successfully integrated (Hoffer and Salisbury 225).

In seeking to improve students' access to an affordable college education and its promise of advantage for their future lives, it will be important to remember that the real worth of a textbook is its ability to facilitate teaching and learning within the framework of relationship between the

student, the teacher, and the discipline. The social aspect of the teaching/learning process defies any attempt to prescribe “one-size-fits-all” solutions to the problem of costs of textbooks.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

Many faculty are aware of and care about the financial burden textbooks impose on their students. As part of an effort led by student PIRGs, for example, “1,000 professors across the country have signed a statement of intent to fight against the ‘going rate’ that publishing companies charge for textbooks” (Marsh). A recent survey of students and faculty from the component universities in the Texas State University system revealed that “eighty-nine percent [of faculty] said they would be willing to take measures to reduce costs to students such as submitting their textbook orders earlier than the current deadline” (“SHSU Report”). The American Association of University Professors includes cost as one of the considerations influencing textbook selection (“On Professors”).

Faculty, however, have good reasons for resisting many of the alternatives to textbooks. For administrators and others in the college whose *primary* concern is not student learning, faculty resistance to initiatives like e-textbooks or free online readings may be difficult to understand, but for faculty, many proposals to reduce the cost of textbooks raise concerns about how learning will be affected. Legislation asking faculty to continue using older editions of a text, to avoid purchasing books that are “bundled” with additional materials, and to seek electronic alternatives to costly textbooks limits textbook choices in a way that might undermine a professor’s or a discipline’s pedagogical effectiveness. Because a professor’s job is to be concerned with learning, each alternative to costly texts must be considered in light of faculty perspectives on learning in general as well as learning in specific disciplines.

What is the purpose of the text?

For most faculty, the textbook constitutes a key learning resource, but faculty vary in the degree to which they depend on a textbook to supplement their teaching. One factor influencing textbook selection and use is a college’s reliance on contingent faculty—faculty who are not full time or tenured. Graduate assistants, for example, are likely to be teaching for the first time and

therefore may rely more heavily on a textbook. The textbook may shape their pedagogical approach to the class, and they may depend on ancillary materials that a seasoned instructor would not find as useful. Similarly, community colleges rely on part-time faculty to teach many (in some colleges, the majority) of high enrollment courses such as college algebra and freshman composition. Originally, colleges hired part-time and adjunct faculty because these individuals could offer a specialty that full-time faculty at the college could not (American Federation of Teachers). Since 1975, however, the number of contingent faculty has increased substantially, from 30.2 percent to 48 percent in 2005, according to the AAUP, which used the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to compile data on part-time faculty (Monk). According to Joseph Hermanowicz, associate professor of sociology at the University of Georgia, “The American academic profession has reached the point where more faculty members hold non-tenureline appointments than those who do” (qtd. in “The Faculty”).

Contingent faculty are a diverse group that includes recent graduates looking for teaching experience, professionals who enjoy teaching on the side, and retired teachers with years of experience. For contingent faculty new to teaching, some of whom are hired at the last minute, the textbook and ancillary materials may be extremely important. At most schools, though, contingent faculty do not have a voice in selecting the textbooks that their students will purchase and that may shape their courses in significant ways. As a result, contingent faculty accustomed to a different text or a different approach to teaching may convey their dissatisfaction with the text to the students and may use the textbook minimally or not at all, which creates the perception that textbooks are not worth their purchase price, causes high levels of dissatisfaction among students and does little to enhance learning.

Alternatives to textbooks may also present problems for those who are not full-time professors, who do not help shape curriculum and who may not even have offices on campus. Online alternatives, for example, may require access to up-to-date technology and training in how to use this technology, both of which are much more easily provided to full-time faculty. Contingent faculty, who are paid significantly less than full-time faculty and sometimes have other jobs, are not likely to spend time and effort searching the Web to find or create free reading material for their students. Students may pay less for a custom text but use it less because the part-time professor teaching the class had no role in creating it and doesn't value it.

Other factors affecting textbook selection are the discipline, the class, and the instructor's background and expertise. To understand these different perspectives, members of the TCC alternative course materials task force conducted a survey of TCC faculty in different disciplines. All of the TCC faculty surveyed indicated that they use the course text, but issues governing textbook use and selection varied by discipline. Some disciplines, such as biology, mathematics, and nursing, offer courses in a series with a fairly rigid sequence of concepts that all faculty cover. Some disciplines, such as information security, have articulation agreements that influence their choice and use of a textbook. Similarly, some disciplines consider how a textbook might help meet accreditation requirements and state-mandated learning goals. A mathematics professor responding to the survey stated, "We have to adhere to state requirements so that our courses will transfer to universities." In fields that are rapidly changing, such as computer information systems, up-to-date information is very important, whereas for disciplines such as English the text does not usually need to be current.

Individual classes within a discipline may be prerequisites for other classes, affecting textbook selection. A professor of veterinary technology, for example, stated that each "student must have the fundamentals before proceeding to the more complex, whether within a course or before moving on to other courses." In the digital media program, "each course builds upon previously acquired technical skills that lead to the development of critical and creative thinking in students. It is imperative that the three full-time instructors know and understand what the others [in different classes] are teaching." In nursing, "the curriculum for the program is set. Going from simple to complex. It is a progression."

For disciplines that do not offer sequential courses or do not have to be as concerned with program accreditation and other external demands, the professor's background and expertise may influence textbook selection. A sociology professor, for example, explained that while "there is a set of theories and concepts that all professors in the discipline would teach" in an introductory course, advanced courses allow for much greater flexibility. Course book selection, therefore, can be the prerogative of the individual instructor, who may have specific topics he or she would like to address. Even in introductory courses, English faculty have a great deal of freedom to select textbooks that reflect their individual preferences, as long as the text helps students meet the course objectives. As one English professor wrote, "Once objectives have been agreed upon,

faculty should have the freedom within the classroom to teach the skills and concepts of the discipline using their individual teaching style and creativity. To compromise academic freedom is to compromise quality instruction.”

Academic freedom also means that professors in the same discipline may or may not share the same teaching philosophies or approaches. According to one history professor, “No historian teaches the same concepts/content/interpretation as his/her colleagues. Just agreeing on a text causes blood to run in the streets.” A humanities professor made a similar comment:

“Humanities is about the human side of history, so the approaches to teaching it are nearly as varied as humanity itself.” A biology professor, on the other hand, stated, “One of the great occurrences [...] is how ‘sharing’ the faculty is with one another as to new approaches, new tweaks to labs, new outside sources, etc. We love to share what worked and what did not.”

A professor’s receptivity to attempts to find less expensive alternatives to the traditional text, therefore, depends a great deal on the professor’s role in the institution, the professor’s discipline, the subject matter being taught, and the professor’s background.

What value do faculty place on textbooks?

In his commentary “One Way to Rein In the Cost of Textbooks: Make Them Free,” Paul F. Delespinasse argues that “given modern technology, there is no reason why textbooks could not be extremely cheap, if not free.” He suggests that both emeritus and active professors might be willing to create texts that could be made available for free online, and he urges scholarly publications to help with the effort by making instructors more aware of their existence. He does acknowledge that “texts originally written for the Internet need not be cleared by reviewers and polished by editors. That places a greater burden on instructors to evaluate a work’s strengths and weaknesses as they consider whether to adopt it. Inevitably, some online texts are poorly written, receive minimal if any editing, and contain gross mistakes of fact and interpretation” (Delespinasse).

In response to the editorial, P. D. Lesko, executive editor of *Adjunct Advocate*, offers this analogy: “Suggesting the use of unedited academic textbooks is akin to suggesting that a suspect accused of a crime doesn’t need a lawyer because, well, the cost of lawyers is just too

burdensome.” A study conducted at the University of California-Berkeley found that “faculty are wary of electronic publishing venues primarily because they are associated with a lack of quality control through peer review” (CHSE). In other words, faculty are concerned that students would “get what they paid for” if their assigned readings were free. Although open-access publishing is not incompatible with the idea of peer review, not all open materials have been reviewed, and some claims of peer review should not be accepted at face value.¹ Faculty who consider adopting open textbooks posted on the Internet would need to invest greater time in scrutinizing these materials, including seeking the opinions of others when examining sections of the text which are outside their own greatest level of expertise. In addition, open-access books are not available in all disciplines, and using open-access modules or journal articles in place of a textbook may not make sense for all courses, especially when the available articles are too specialized or advanced or when the available modules are best used as supplementary materials. These may be more likely to replace the ancillary materials that are offered bundled with textbooks.

Faculty wishing to create their own content need the time and, in many cases, the training to do so. The open-source article, “Open Source Textbooks” notes that not everyone is suited to self-publishing:

Many teachers are not comfortable with the quality of their own writing. ... They lack access to content editors and copy editors, and often do not feel comfortable in asking for such help. ... [P]ublishing on the Web is far more frightening than just running off a few photocopies to share with friends. ... Publishing on the Web requires knowledge and skills that a great many teachers do not have. ... In addition, publishing one’s materials on the Web tends to carry with it some responsibility to keep the materials up to date. ... Developing and writing high quality materials takes a lot of time. ... Moreover, the “reward” system in education often offers little encouragement to teachers who might do such work.

¹ “The editor-in-chief of an academic journal has resigned after his publication accepted a hoax article. The Open Information Science Journal failed to spot that the incomprehensible computer-generated paper was a fake. This was despite heavy hints from its authors, who claimed they were from the Centre for Research in Applied Phrenology—which forms the acronym Crap. The journal, which claims to subject every paper to the scrutiny of other academics, so-called ‘peer review,’ accepted the paper” (Shepherd).

In their article about the creation of MIT Open Course Ware, “Open Course Ware: A Case Study in Institutional Decision Making,” Steven R. Lerman and Shigeru Miyagawa explain that “the key caveat to the general faculty support for OCW [open course ware] is that it cannot impose an additional time burden on them. It is difficult to overstate the importance of this issue. As a faculty, we operate essentially at capacity, and doing any new task inevitably means not doing something else” (AAUP, “Open”).

Moreover, faculty may be wary of textbook alternatives if those alternatives require learning new technology and developing new pedagogies. In her article “Bridging the Digital Divide: Reflections on ‘Teaching and Learning in the Digital Age,’” history professor Linda Pomerantz presents the findings of a project, conducted in 1998, to study how historians were using technology. She confesses that she and her colleagues at the University of Southern California “had little or no experience doing our own research using the web and no experience at all in using computer-based technologies in our teaching” (512). In the last ten years, institutions have offered support for professors to learn new technologies, and professors have taught themselves. Nonetheless, any change in pedagogy requires professors to develop new approaches to teaching, and as Pomerantz states, this can be time consuming: “It will take years of experimentation and reflection to arrive at a more sophisticated understanding of how to define or redefine our pedagogical goals in the new era, and how to accomplish our pedagogical goals with the new means at hand” (521).

In “New-Media Literacies,” Jason Ohler argues that such experimentation is crucial for professors, but recognizes that professors are not always prepared to adopt new technologies. “If the objective of literacy is to interact and communicate in the real world,” he contends, “then it is in the public’s interest to train instructors in the kinds of new media that are prevalent in the workplace and online social communities. We also need to help instructors understand and apply new media in courses and engage them in developing effective strategies for assessing new-media projects.” Ohler commands faculty to avoid being “book centric” and to “experiment with the media technologies your students use.”

How does the text affect learning?

Many faculty, however, are concerned that any electronic alternatives to print texts undermine some of the most important skills higher education is intended to impart, such as the ability to read. Based on their own experiences as learners, faculty see real value in a permanent print version of a text. In “The Value of a Textbook,” Robert Brooker, himself the author of college texts, argues that “despite the high prices, the long-term value of an accurate, up-to-date textbook far exceeds its cost” and “the benefits [students] will gain from their textbooks and ancillary materials will pay off many times over.” One of the benefits students gain comes from reading, and reading online is not the same as reading a print text. In his *Atlantic Monthly* article, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” Nicholas Carr, a prolific writer and former English literature student, laments his recently acquired inability to read for sustained periods of time. Many of his friends and colleagues feel the same way, claiming “the more they use the web, the more they have to fight to fight to stay focused on long pieces of writing.” Mark Bauerlein is the author of *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future*. In his commentary “Online Literacy Is a Lesser Kind,” he claims that when students read, they “race across the surface, dicing language and ideas into bullets and graphics, seeking what they already want and shunning the rest. They convert history, philosophy, literature, civics, and fine art into information, material to retrieve and pass along.” In disciplines that ask students to read primarily to acquire specific bits of information, such reading may be appropriate, but in English and other liberal arts courses, the text provides more than a means of conveying facts and concepts; engaging with the text facilitates a kind of thinking.

Many scholars worry that reading electronic texts undermines this important kind of thinking. Carr argues that “the kind of deep reading that a sequence of printed pages promotes is valuable not just for the knowledge we acquire from the author’s words but for the intellectual vibrations those words set off within our own minds.” In Bauerlein’s opinion, there has been a “strange flattening of the act of reading” that “equates handheld screens with *Madame Bovary*, as if they made the same cognitive demands and inculcated the same habits of attention.” Bauerlein seems to reject the idea that it is possible to read lengthy works of literature in a digitized format, arguing “screen reading is a mind-set, and we should accept its variance from academic thinking.” In her book *Proust and The Squid* (referenced often in articles dealing with online

reading, including Carr's), Maryanne Wolf cautions that "we do not need to choose between two modes of communication; rather, we must be vigilant not to lose the profound generativity of the reading brain, as we add new dimensions to our intellectual repertoire" (23). Similarly, Bauerlein calls for "an approach that doesn't let teachers and professors so cavalierly violate their charge as stewards of literacy."

As stewards of literacy, most professors also want to emphasize to their students the importance of academic integrity and intellectual property. Phrases like "the free culture movement" and "the free culture ecosystem" are entering the lexicon, reflecting the belief that we as a society should have free access to works that others labor to create. Although many faculty are willing to share, for free, the texts they create, many others are not, and virtually everyone believes that individuals who create a text should receive acknowledgement for their creation. Students, however, may not appreciate the concept of intellectual property, and offering free reading material may perpetuate misconceptions about the obligations we have to credit individuals for their ideas. A 2002 study by Rutgers Management Education Center found not only that more than half of 4,500 high school students surveyed had plagiarized work they found online but also that many saw nothing wrong with it ("Survey"). Faculty resistance to free texts, therefore, may have its roots in strongly held beliefs about the value of ideas.

How does the text affect teaching?

Resistance to abandoning the traditional, albeit more costly, textbook is not, therefore, simply about academic freedom—nor is it about indifference to students' economic costs. Professors have valid reasons for being concerned about textbook alternatives. Different disciplines face different challenges when it comes to selecting a text for their classes, so alternatives such as negotiated volume discounts or retaining textbook editions longer won't work for every professor in every discipline. Added to these concerns are the challenges many faculty face in trying to learn and teach new technologies and the reluctance to replace traditional and valuable ways of reading with electronic alternatives. Colleges and universities intent on reducing the cost of textbooks, therefore, must take the faculty perspective into account. Administrators and students should attempt to understand why faculty are not always eager to embrace new technologies, and administrators should provide support and incentives for faculty to explore

alternatives to costly texts. Even when working with colleagues to negotiate pricing with a publisher, faculty need the time to identify and review all the material available to them—and to review the vast array of free materials requires hours of searching, concentrated reading, and studying to ensure that information is up-to-date, accurate, and scholarly.

INSTITUTIONS' PERSPECTIVE

Administration

For reasons mentioned above, faculty are not at the forefront of efforts to reduce textbook costs. College presidents and governing boards, on the other hand, must address the public outcry regarding the increasing cost of higher education, and must respond to recent legislation designed to reduce the cost of textbooks. Not surprisingly, therefore, administrators more often than faculty appear to be leading the efforts to reduce the cost of textbooks.

For example, a former Chancellor of Foothill-De Anza Community College District, Dr. Martha Kanter, along with many other community college administrators in California, was involved with the Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (CCCOER), which seeks “to identify, create, and/or repurpose existing open educational resources as open textbooks and make them available for use by community college students and faculty” (Kanter and Baker). In May 2008, the California Textbook Summit Action Planning Group recommended several steps to reduce the cost of textbooks to the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, including “[i]nvestigating other potential solutions on your campuses, such as creating textbook rental programs, increasing library reserves, encouraging the use of open educational resources, and negotiating with publishers for customized textbook editions, customized bundles, and the timing of new editions.” They recommended “that CEO’s and Trustees take leadership to focus college-wide attention and effort in their colleges and districts on increasing textbook affordability” (“CA BOG”). In her new position as undersecretary of education, Dr. Kanter is in a position to encourage more nationwide attention to the issue of costly textbooks.

Meanwhile, administrators at all institutions are already aware of this issue and interested in textbook affordability. From the administrative perspective, reducing the cost of textbooks may

be a good way to attract students, especially if cost is a barrier. According to an article in *Inside Higher Ed*, a study from the Institute for Higher Education Policy found that “financial concerns were among the most significant barriers” that prevent students from attending college. The survey also found that students who were eligible to attend college but who chose not to “reported that the availability of financial aid was either ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ important in their decision not to enroll.” Both counselors and potential students reported that tuition cost along with a lack of financial aid greatly influenced the decision not to attend college (Moltz).

For those who choose and can afford college, many factors, including cost, influence which college they will attend. According to Christopher Shults in “Making the Case for a Positive Approach to Improving Organizational Performance in Higher Education Institutions,” “lowered levels of funding, increasing student expectations for convenience and relevance, and increasingly competitive environments have created more hostile and volatile markets for colleges and universities.” Shults argues that in particular community colleges, whose mission is often to serve low-income students, “need to more effectively maneuver through environmental shifts, changing stakeholder expectations, and increasing competition than most higher education entities.” College leaders at all levels, however, want to attract more students, and reducing the cost of textbooks is clearly a means of meeting “stakeholder expectations.”

When drastic budget cuts are forcing presidents and governing boards to make difficult decisions about how to allocate funds, the ability to compete with other institutions for student enrollment can become more challenging. *The Chronicle for Higher Education* reports that, according to a February 2009 survey conducted by Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, approximately “80 percent of the governing boards of public universities say they are dealing with state budget cuts this year” (Fain). In another article, Peter Facione points out that “[p]ublic institutions are particularly at risk during budget crises because their relatively more agile private competitors can snap up market share while the publics—hamstrung by multilayered internal and external procedures, regulations, and bureaucratic reviews—may not be able to adapt quickly enough.” In such a climate, administrators are keen to make any changes that will allow their institutions to remain competitive in attracting students. More so than faculty, who focus on the classroom learning experience, administrators must be attentive to students as customers, for declines in enrollment affect the institution’s ability to receive

funding.

Administrators must also be concerned with retaining students once they enroll. In their article “Predictors of First-Year Student Retention in the Community College,” David Fike and Renea Fike explain, “From the institution’s perspective, the retention of students is necessary for financial stability and to sustain academic programs. Public policy makers are advocating accountability, and one strong measure is student retention leading to graduation or transfer.” Graduating or transferring more students is always a priority for an institution, but budget cuts may force administrators to place greater emphasis on student retention. When asked how the economic crisis affected them, all of the 371 member institutions of the National Association of Independent Colleges indicated that “maintaining student enrollment” was a major concern (M. E.). The cost of textbooks is not likely to be a major factor in increasing retention rates, but from the administrative perspective, any measures to reduce costs should be considered.

Student success is a priority for administrators not only because more students equals more funding but also because administrators must be accountable to legislatures. Former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, in the now famous Spellings Report, called attention to the cost of education and demanded greater accountability among colleges and universities. Although her tenure ended when President George W. Bush left office, the demand for greater accountability is unlikely to subside. Both state and federal governments have been active in an attempt to curb the escalating price of textbooks. The bulk of legislative proposals have been aimed at textbooks in public K-12 schools—textbooks purchased by government agencies—legislators are also taking a look at higher education. Many state and federal proposals are in the form of recommendations that lack funding or lack the ability to enforce recommendations; college administrators nonetheless have good reason to worry about attempts to regulate higher education since, if passed, these proposals would have a significant impact on colleges.

For example, the 110th Congress passed The Higher Education Opportunity Act (Public Law No: 110-315), which will have an impact on all of higher education beginning July 1, 2010. Section 133 of this legislation stipulates

The purpose of this section is to ensure that students have access to affordable course materials by decreasing costs to students and enhancing transparency and disclosure with respect to the selection, purchase, sale, and use of course materials. It is the intent of this section to encourage all of the involved parties, including faculty, students, administrators, institutions of higher education, bookstores, distributors, and publishers, to work together to identify ways to decrease the cost of college textbooks and supplemental materials for students while supporting the academic freedom of faculty members to select high quality course materials for students. (HR 4137)

This legislation requires colleges to provide students with detailed information about adopted textbooks prior to the start of the course and to disclose information to students concerning programs for renting textbooks; purchasing used textbooks; institutional buy-back programs; alternative content delivery programs; or other available institutional cost-saving strategies. In the 111th Congress, more proposals pertaining to the cost and creation of course materials relating to higher education are pending.

In addition, numerous state laws and proposals related to the course materials in higher education exists. There are 50 pending legislative proposals for the 2009 legislative sessions. In the past two years, 28 states have passed or considered legislative proposals relating to course materials in higher education, including proposals providing grants to colleges to lower costs; prohibiting the sale of course materials by faculty that were provided to faculty as review copies; implementing more stringent requirements for the adoption of course materials; and unbundling textbooks that are not a part of a bundled package (“State Bills”). At a recent meeting of the American Council on Education, former Secretary of Education and U. S. Senator Lamar Alexander “warned that the only way college leaders (with his help) would be able to persuade his Congressional colleagues that higher education deserved to be less regulated would be to address the thing they are most concerned about: the rising price of college” (“Politicians”). Alexander’s message is that college administrators must proactively meet the expectations of their constituents or contend with state and federal regulation that forces them to be attentive.

Administrators, however, face challenges when attempting to be proactive. Robin Wilson, in his article “Downturn Threatens Faculty’s Role in Running Colleges,” worries that administrators

will make changes that affect curriculum without adequate input from faculty. “Tough economic times are leading administrators to propose swift changes that short-circuit faculty governance,” he writes, undermining the long-held principle of giving “professors wide-ranging authority over educational matters.” Governing boards, on the other hand, expect rapid responses from college leaders. Augustana College President Steven Bahls notes, “Many boards have watched colleges wrestle for months or years with the development of new curricula and strategic plans. They fear that higher education doesn’t have the experience to make the relatively rapid decisions necessary to adjust to our nation’s unstable economic situation.” He cites Moody’s Investors Service’s “2009 U.S. Higher Education Outlook” report, which notes that most colleges are “consensus-driven organizations that are not accustomed to rapid implementation of expense reductions and budget changes.” Caught between the need to be accountable to public demands and the principle of shared governance, administrators may face difficulties implementing cost-saving measures, such as the use of open-source materials.

Financial concerns and the need to be accountable to governing boards and legislatures influence how administrators view alternatives to textbooks, but it’s important to keep in mind that, like faculty, administrators want to see students succeed. Fike and Fike point out that the most important reasons administrators care about retention rates is because “we want our students to have a positive college experience, complete their academic goals, and enter the workforce.” A 2005 survey conducted by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* found that, while “financial issues permeate almost every facet of the top job on campuses,” presidents identify “excellence of education” as one of their top concerns. In fact, 75% believe “colleges should be more accountable for their students’ educational outcomes” (Selingo). Administrators, in other words, are not interested in implementing cost-saving measures merely to save money; they have student success in mind as well.

College Bookstores

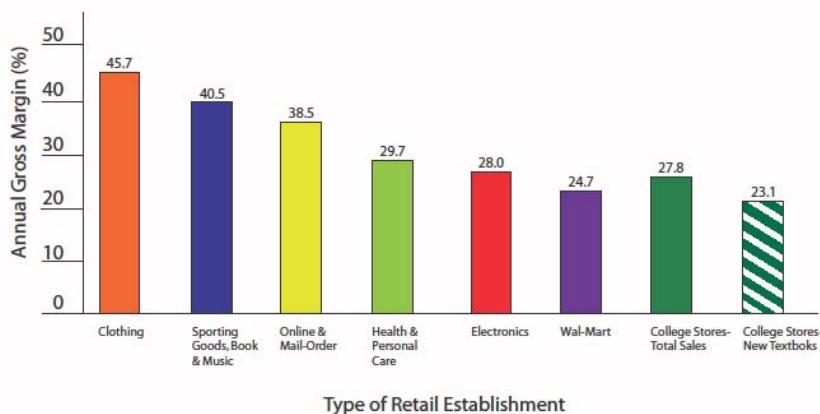
The National Association of College Stores (NACS) estimates that 4,500 college stores exist in the U.S. Like other stakeholders covered in this report, these stores are a diverse group: size, ownership, competition, settings, and customer bases all vary widely. The largest share of college stores are owned by their colleges. These may be run by the institution or they may be

operated under contract, as cooperatives, or by student associations (Higher Education).

Institutionally owned campus stores should be considered an important piece of the institutional perspective on textbooks because their income benefits institutional programs. Further, college stores exist to perform functions that support the institution’s educational mission.

Bookstores receive textbook adoptions from faculty, research the availability of the requested materials from suppliers of used and new books, acquire the books faculty requested, and make each class section’s required course materials available to students. They charge their customers the books’ cost plus a profit margin. Many of the other stakeholders identified in this report may assume that, because bookstores profit from textbook sales, they create much of the textbook-affordability problem. However, the size of the typical college store’s profit margin might surprise students and other stakeholders. The NACS reports that the average gross margin on new textbook sales in 2008 was 22.7%, while data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicated 2008 average gross margins in retail trade and food services overall ranged from 16.2% to 50.4%. The NACS maintains that college store margins have remained “relatively constant” since 1989. (“FAQ on College Textbooks”). More recently, the NACS reported 2009 campus stores’ pre-tax income from new textbooks was 6.3% (“Where the New”).

Average Retail Gross Margins



Sources: NACS 2009 College Store Industry Financial Report; Annual Benchmark Report for Retail Trade and Food Services: 1993 through 2007, by the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, June 2009; Wal-Mart data: Reuters and Company reports.

According to the NACS, margins are slightly higher for custom textbooks (25.4%) and for used course books (35.9%) (“2008 College Store”). The higher margin charged for used books is related to the greater effort expended in stocking and selling them:

[T]he process of acquiring, cleaning, pricing, and re-shelving used books involves significantly more time than that of new textbooks and increases college stores’ operating expenses. In addition, because used books are non-returnable to publishers ... college stores assume a higher risk on their used book inventory. There is also the possibility that the publication of a new edition will make inventoried used textbooks obsolete, even though the store has already purchased them. (“FAQ on Used”)

Despite the risks, college stores prefer to deal in used textbooks, not just because of their larger margins but also because they save students money. Used textbooks offer a savings of 25% compared to new-book prices; moreover, if students buy used books at 75% of the new price and then sell them at buyback for 50% of new-book value, which is considered the full buy-back price, students can use their books all semester for just a quarter of the cost of buying and keeping new textbooks (Simon).

College stores typically do not place orders for new books until they have already explored all avenues for securing used books. In addition to buying copies back from students, stores contact used-book wholesalers. Some college stores even ask wholesalers to run their buy-back events because of the wholesalers’ expert knowledge of the used-book market (“FAQ on Used”). Despite these efforts to maximize the supply of used books, the ratio of new books to used books sold on most campuses is about 2:1 (“2008 College Store”). There are several reasons for this, beyond the publisher’s revision cycle. Custom textbooks and bundled packages, in particular, can be difficult for the store to stock as used books. Because custom textbooks and packages are created for a specific institution or even a specific instructor’s course, wholesalers are not interested in stocking them, and the on-campus buy-back is the only source of used copies (Lickteig).

Late decisions on textbook adoptions and unclear textbook orders from faculty also contribute to the limited supply of used books. According to Mike Lickteig, textbook manager of Jayhawk

Bookstore in Lawrence, Kan., bookstores set early deadlines for textbook requisitions to allow enough time for researching availability, ordering books, and stocking the shelves. Lickteig says early adoption is especially important in the cases of coursepacks, print-on-demand titles, custom textbooks and bundles, and books from small presses, because bookstores need more time to search for and acquire them. However, early deadlines sometimes are impractical for faculty to meet, especially when the instructor for a class has not yet been identified or when faculty have not yet reached a decision about a change in textbooks. Further, unclear instructions or incomplete information from a faculty member (Lickteig's example is a note saying "same as the last time I taught this class," without ISBN number, title, author, publisher, etc.) will delay the bookstore's processing of an order. A late or problematic requisition has an impact on buy-back events at the end of the semester. Lickteig explains,

Typically, a bookstore might offer 50% of the original price to acquire the book [at buy-back], but only with a guarantee it will be used again (the only guarantee is a firm adoption from an instructor). If it is not certain the book will have future value it might still be purchased during buyback, but at "wholesale" or "speculative" prices—approximately 5%-20% of retail. Failing to make course lists available before buyback limits the number of used books available to students at the beginning of the semester and hinders students in seeking a venue for the disposition of unwanted books.

Once all available used copies of a textbook have been secured, the college store must order any additional copies as new books. Selecting a quantity of new books to order involves making some guesses about class enrollment and the store's estimated market share. According to the NACS, 70% of total student spending on textbooks and other course materials takes place at a college store or on its Web site. The remaining sales are transacted with other stores, online booksellers, other students or alumni, and on "student-to-student" Web sites ([Higher Education](#)). Lickteig explains the questions the store must consider:

Instructors sometimes assume a store should or will order books based upon the class's estimated enrollment, but there are far more factors to consider and, in fact, a store will almost *never* order 100% of the enrollment. Criteria to consider when determining order quantities include: if the book has been used before, what was its sell-through? Was the

book an integral part of the class? Is it available online? Does the bookstore have off-campus competitors, and what share of the market do they sell to? Can unsold copies be returned, and are there penalties for returns? Will the book have value at buyback? Are the titles mass-market paperbacks or other trade publications that can be obtained anywhere? A bookstore strives for approximately a 70% sell-through, and makes order decisions with this number as its goal. Why 70 percent? It allows for reasonable returns while ensuring supply is sufficient to meet demand. Consistently over-ordering books ties up a store's available cash, and excessive returns drain money on freight and handling.

A relatively new source of competition for campus stores is the Internet, and online sales through sites not affiliated with a college store now account for 18% of textbook sales (Higher Education). College stores are adapting to the changing marketplace; the NACS reports that 64% of college stores make sales through Web sites, and 7.8% of all 2007-2008 sales at U.S. college stores were transacted online. As the NACS puts it, "With a 'click and mortar' strategy, the college store offers the best of both worlds to students—the convenience of web ordering, paired with ease of returns, the ability to pick up items for immediate use, one-stop shopping, accurate textbook information students need for their courses" (Higher Education).

Just as a digital marketplace is developing, so is digital merchandise, in the forms of commercially produced e-textbooks and open course materials online. According to a recent NACS study, in some classes nearly 100% of course material is digital; however, fewer than 6% of college courses use digital materials, and only 38.1% of college stores currently sell digital materials (Mutter).

Seizing on the Internet's potential as both marketplace and content-delivery medium, the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, in its 2007 report on textbooks entitled "Turn the Page," called for the creation of a "national digital marketplace" as its proposed solution to the problem of rising textbook prices:

The centerpiece of such a marketplace . . . must be an enabling infrastructure of technology and support services with which institutions, students, faculty, bookstores,

publishers, and other content providers can interact efficiently. This infrastructure would consist of a transaction and rights clearinghouse, numerous marketplace Web applications, and hosted infrastructure resources. The transaction and rights clearinghouse would process each multi-part transaction; collect funds from the purchaser; distribute royalties, fees for resources, and/or commissions; secure rights through a digital rights management capability; and track content. Marketplace Web applications would enable transactions with content providers and institutional portals. The hosted infrastructure would ensure that all systems interface, support a registry of millions of learning items, provide marketplace services to thousands of campuses and millions of users, and process hundreds of millions of transactions for both fee-based and no-cost content. (v)

In his testimony for the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, the president of the NACS, William Simpson, offered the NACS's perspective on this recommendation:

Such a complex national business model deserves additional study and stakeholder engagement prior to endorsement and adoption. A key question NACS believes must be addressed in the context of rising college costs is: will this proposed business model be successful in driving down costs for students when at its heart it calls for the greater development, design, and use of sophisticated custom-course materials that may have built-in obsolescence? As publishers have explained, these types of products have significantly higher development and ongoing costs as they attempt to meet the evolving needs of the higher education community. In fact, the GAO concluded in its report that these types of emerging tools, now primarily offered as supplemental materials for faculty and students but paid for by students through the price of new textbooks, are primarily responsible for recent price increases.

In September 2008, the NACS unveiled its own digital initiative, a subsidiary named NACS Media Solutions (Young). The NACS invested \$1 million in research and development for this project to offer electronic materials "with ease and at an affordable price for students" (Mutter). In September 2009, one year after NACS Media Solutions was introduced, it announced a "joint development agreement with the Canadian Campus Retail Associates, Inc. (CCRA) for co-

development and deployment of a common digital content platform (DCP) for electronic books and print-on-demand content designed with student friendly terms and reflecting the academic nature of the collegiate marketplace” (Independent). “In the near future,” a press release issued by the Independent College Bookstore Association stated,

web services and tools will be available to faculty to assist in the conversion of course packs, creation of digital course materials, and the review and adoption of faculty-authored, university press, and other publishers’ content. The DCP content repository presently contains a collection of digital study versions which are mapped to thousands of conventional titles currently used at most North American universities and colleges.

The release went on to quote the president of the CCRA, who pointed out that bookstores need to position themselves to “remain relevant” as both their business processes and principal products, simultaneously, become digitized.

Despite these challenges, as alternatives to traditional textbooks and traditional delivery systems emerge, college stores still see vital roles for themselves and the service they provide. The NACS has published its perspective on several proposed new directions, including open-access materials and textbook rental programs. The NACS supports “the expansion of research, development, use, and evaluation of Open Educational Resources” and believes college stores can help faculty acquire and use such materials; however, NACS feels that a commercial component is necessary to “equitably recover costs, establish a sustainable model for the continued use of open educational resources, and to ensure a competitive and broad marketplace of ideas, information, and choices” (“NACS Position”).

The NACS has taken no formal position on textbook rental programs, although it offers some cautions about the significant start-up costs (for inventory, administration, storage, and maintenance) and the necessity for faculty to commit to a textbook for “four to six semesters before changing, which is often a difficult proposition.” It notes that in May 2008, only about 2% of the college stores in the U.S. and Canada offered rental services (“FAQ on Textbook Rental”). Since the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act established a grant program for ten schools and their college stores to develop textbook rental programs, the NACS has been

engaged in presenting information on the grant (and on ways to implement the other provisions of the Act, including requirements for publishing adopted textbooks' ISBN numbers) to their member stores through their Web site, at <http://www.nacs.org/public/heoa.asp>.

The NACS recommends the following strategies for improving textbook affordability:

1. Promote savings through sales tax exemptions and tax credits for textbooks.
2. Promote savings through strong buy-back programs for textbooks.
3. Promote savings through the sale of used textbooks and work to increase the availability of used books.
4. Work with faculty and educational departments to ensure the earliest and most accurate textbook adoption feasible.
5. Work with faculty and educational departments to ensure that all bundles are economically sound and necessary.
6. Work with faculty and educational departments to ensure that they only adopt textbooks and ancillary materials that will actually be used during a course.
7. Champion multi-year adoption of textbook editions to ensure a strong used-book market.
8. Promote better communication between faculty and students on textbook requirements and access issues.
9. Establish and adhere to fair and clearly communicated textbook return/refund policies.
10. Work to increase financial aid available for textbooks and course materials.

(Simpson)

It should be noted that the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act, approved by Congress after this list was created, did increase the financial aid formula for books and supplies to \$600 from \$450. Some of the other steps offered by the NACS create potential negative repercussions for other stakeholders in this discussion; sales tax exemptions, for example, have an impact on funding for state-supported institutions and may raise concerns for such an institution's administration (and for many other segments of state and local government unrelated to this report, including public safety), and multi-year adoptions would place a limit on the academic

freedom of faculty. Four of the ten are strategies for increasing the supply of used books, an aim that conflicts with the needs of publishers and authors, who do not benefit from used-book sales—and whose perspectives follow in the coming sections of this report.

PUBLISHER PERSPECTIVE

Like bookstores, publishers (and many authors) profit from textbook sales; for this reason, they too are often viewed as villains in discussions of rapidly escalating textbook prices. They can, however, also be seen as beset by conflicting economic pressures as well as competing philosophies concerning intellectual property rights.

Making a textbook

Publishers might well argue that comparing textbook costs in 1986 to textbook costs in 2009 is like comparing apples to Apple Brown Betty a la mode. Today's textbook, with all its concomitantly developed supporting materials, requires more handling and contains more ingredients, so to speak, than the simple bound volume from 1986—more labor, more raw materials, more options, more technical support, more technological infrastructure, and more methods of delivery. Related Web sites and other electronic learning tools are expensive, not just to create but also to maintain, support, and “continually update” (College Stores Research and Educational Foundation).

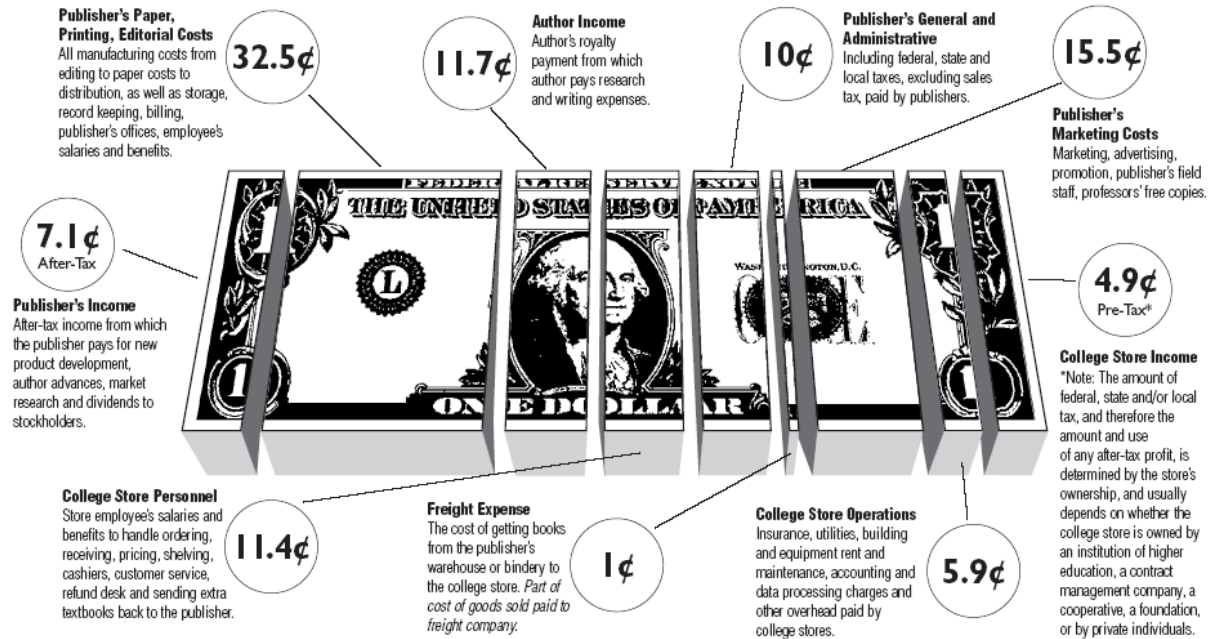
Publishers market a variety of textbook options—full-color hard-bound editions, paperbacks and condensed editions, bundled (packaged with ancillary instructional materials) and unbundled options, and digital and custom textbooks—at many different price points.² They say the market for lower-cost options has grown in recent years, bringing down the average price of a new textbook. Custom textbooks, in which instructors are able to order precisely the chapters and

²When publishers offer options for ordering materials either bundled or unbundled—and especially if they offer options for customized textbooks—an informed sales force is necessary to work with faculty to be sure all available choices are known and understood. Publishers' sales representatives can be an expensive workforce, with starting salaries above \$50,000 per year (www.careerbuilder.com). Advocates of unbundling and customization as a means of containing costs may wish to investigate whether those options increase the faculty's reliance on the sales force—and how much that sales force may add to textbook prices overall.

materials they want to use, are popular with both faculty and students, publishers claim, and digital versions of hundreds of titles are now available (“Key Information” 2).

On its Web site, the Association of American Publishers (AAP) lists factors affecting textbook pricing. Developing a new textbook and its accompanying materials, a process that takes “years of exhaustive research, precise thought, and contributions from dozens of individuals,” can cost more than \$1 million, most of which “is attributable to paying for the work and original ideas of authors, experts, editors, researchers, reviewers, and designers.” Other factors affecting textbook price include inflation, freight and transportation, bookstore profit, paper, the labor involved in layout/typesetting/printing, and taxes (“FAQ”). An even higher estimate—that a well designed science textbook required as much as \$2.5 million to develop (Brooker)—appeared earlier in this report. Moreover, undertaking the expensive project of developing a new textbook entails some risk. Some textbooks that receive the full measure of editing, designing, reviewing and revising meet the sad fate of never being adopted, or of having relatively low sales.

Where the New **Textbook Dollar** Goes* ...



*College store numbers are averages and reflect the most current 2004-2005 data gathered by the National Association of College Stores. Publisher numbers are estimates based on data provided by the Association of American Publishers.



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In 2006, the National Association of College Stores released data on textbook production and delivery costs in “Where the New Textbook Dollar Goes.” The NACS found that the largest share of every dollar paid for a new textbook went toward “all manufacturing costs from editing to paper costs to distribution, as well as storage, record keeping, billing, publisher’s offices, employees’ salaries and benefits.” Royalty payments to authors accounted for 11.7 cents. Ten cents paid the publisher’s state and local taxes, excluding sales tax. The publisher’s after-tax income was just over seven cents.³

³ **A quick word about international editions:** Virtually all of the statistics and charts presented throughout this report illustrate aspects of the domestic market for textbooks of American publishers. American publishers also sell “international editions” of

How many dollars does it take to buy a textbook?

According to the AAP Web site, the National Association of College Stores calculated the average retail price of a college textbook in 2006 at \$52 (“FAQ”). (More recent statistics from the NACS, found in [Higher Education Retail Market Facts & Figures 2009](#), show the average price of a new textbook to be \$57, and that of a used textbook to be \$49.) The National Retail Federation’s 2006 “Back-to-College” spending survey, quoted on the same AAP Web site, suggested that college students would spend 1.8 percent less on college textbooks in 2006 than they did in 2005 (“FAQ”).

As mentioned earlier, the Government Accountability Office’s 2005 report on textbook prices found that prices had risen at twice the rate of inflation from December 1986 to December 2004 and that students at two-year colleges in 2003-2004 could expect to pay nearly \$900 per year for books and supplies (United States. Government Accountability Office. [College Textbooks](#)). Publishers dispute these figures, as well as many of the conclusions drawn in the report.

One of the publishers’ complaints, filed by the AAP as a formal commentary and published in an appendix to the GAO report, is that the GAO’s calculation of price increases does not include “quality adjustments” that reflect added enhancements such as Web sites and other electronic materials—in other words, they protest that the GAO is comparing the 1986 price of raw apples to the 2004 price of Apple Brown Betty a la mode. They argue that chart labels and report narrative referencing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, throughout the report, refer to “textbooks” while the BLS data actually included (United States. Government Accountability Office. [College Textbooks 40](#)). Furthermore, the BLS data do not reflect the “increasing

books, usually at a much-reduced price. These books are not to be sold in the domestic market, but online shopping sites do allow American students an opportunity to purchase books from overseas. Publishers attempt to prohibit the re-importation of their international editions, but students who know about international editions often share advice about shopping for them online. Some reports (e.g., Koch) have questioned the fairness of overseas pricing differentials and called for their abolishment. The publishers’ perspective, voice by the AAP’s then-President Pat Schroeder in “AAP: Analysis of the College Textbook Cost Study Plan & Economic Analysis,” follows:

As GAO affirmed in its 2005 report, pricing products to reflect local market conditions is a common and legal practice. Members of many industries, especially those involving intellectual property such as music and movie industries, are constrained by local market factors and price accordingly. The alternatives are to not sell your products in foreign markets, or to do so at prices that will result in few sales but result in outright piracy of your works. It is important to note that in the textbook market, any incremental overseas sales help defray publishers’ substantial fixed costs—costs that would otherwise be borne entirely by U.S. students.

penetration of lower-cost alternatives that are replacing the traditional unabridged, hardcover texts, a significant trend over the last ten years” (United States. Government Accountability Office. College Textbooks 39).

The GAO report also used data from the U.S. Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) as a source of information about costs. The AAP asserts that the IPEDS data is based on aggregated estimates supplied by college administrators “with no instructions from the Department of Education or any attempts to standardize the information.” In supplying this data, administrators are asked to estimate students’ expenses for books and supplies, which may include “computers, calculators, lab equipment, and other materials that represent about 27% of total student spending on books and supplies, according to the National Association of College Stores. Publishers do not produce or market supplies. ... [T]wo independently derived estimates ... confirm that the average full-time equivalent student spends about \$580 per year on textbooks, far less than the \$898 figure used repeatedly in the GAO draft” (United States. Government Accountability Office. College Textbooks 40-41). It should be noted that, because many ancillary materials cannot be used without computers, it is possible to argue that some types of supplies *should* be seen as part of the cost of the textbook, even though they are not items sold by publishers. In trying to form a complete picture of the student’s textbook-related financial burden, a case could even be made for including the cost of an Internet service provider, if books are supported by related Web sites.

Finally, some have questioned the validity of comparing textbook prices to the overall inflation rate, a comparison that may devalue intellectual pursuits and the products of an educated workforce. While elements of the publishing process have been assisted by changes in technology, most of the work of creating a book cannot be done by machines. Nor can the labor of writing, editing, illustrating, and marketing textbooks be performed by poorly educated workers in locations not subject to U.S. minimum wage laws. The Consumer Price Index is affected by countless items whose prices are influenced by practices that may not be appropriate for the textbook publishing industry. As Cornell University science librarian Philip Davis noted recently,

The comparison [to overall inflation] forms the basis of an argument that publishers are engaged in profiteering and a pronouncement that the current model of publishing is unsustainable, or more emphatically stated, “broken.” ... All of this hinges upon the validity of comparing library costs and expenditures to the Consumer Price Index. ... Industrialization and globalization have lowered the price of clothing, consumer electronics, and children’s toys, yet it hasn’t resulted in reducing academic and professional salaries. ... By adopting the CPI as a general frame of reference, almost any industry that requires huge professional worker input will look like it is spiraling out of control.

Are textbooks unaffordable?

In addition to disputing the accuracy of claims about textbook prices, publishers question whether students’ perceptions of textbooks as “expensive” may be a matter of student priorities; they say students are willing to part with greater sums of money for the things that they desire more. The National Retail Federation study (cited earlier in this report) that showed students would spend less money on textbooks in 2006 than they did in 2005 also showed that college students were willing to spend significant sums on other things, such as clothing, dorm furnishings, and electronics, including not just computers but also video games, TVs, and iPods. The most recent “Back-to-College” survey shows that electronics and computer-related equipment constitute by far the largest category of expenses for a 2009 college student. Total back-to-college spending on electronics, according to the 2009 NRF survey conducted by BIGresearch during June 30-July 7, was expected to be \$12.95 billion, compared with \$2.97 billion spent on school supplies, \$3.9 billion spent on dorm or apartment furnishings, and \$5.77 billion on clothing and accessories, excluding shoes. The NRF survey showed that average spending on school supplies, after declining from 2005 to 2006, has remained fairly level, with a slight increase from 2008 to the current year (National Retail Federation). One thing worth noting about this survey, however, is that it appears to measure consumer expectations about spending, rather than tracking actual purchases and purchase prices. Further, the survey indicated fewer than half of college students from families earning less than \$50,000 per year expected to buy *any* collegiate-branded gear (34.3%), electronics (47%), or dorm furnishings (26.6%).

According to the AAP Web site, a 2004 Harris Interactive study determined that college students spent a total of \$3 billion on movies, DVDs, concert tickets, and other entertainment. The Web site credited three separate polls (Harris Interactive, J.D. Power and Associates, and the Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association) with this information about college students' car expenses: "Cars: \$15 billion annually. Nearly nine out of ten college students own a car. College students purchase one out of every ten new cars. They also spend another \$4.2 billion annually to customize their cars."

Issues raised in PIRG reports: Bundling

In a response to the 2004 CALPIRG report, "Ripoff 101: How the Current Practices of the Textbook Industry Drive Up the College Cost of Textbooks" (see "Student Perspective"), former Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, then president and CEO of the Association of American Publishers, wrote a letter of protest to the director of the State PIRGs' Higher Education Project. "Publishers were never contacted in the course of your study," she wrote, "although we made every effort to present our side. We believe your report is totally one-sided and fatally flawed." She noted the small number of faculty members who were interviewed for the study, took issue with the report's characterization of the bundling practice as coercive, and presented data from two sources (Student Monitor LLC and the College Board), both of which concluded "student spending on new and used course materials has risen between 3 and 4 percent annually over the past four years—a far cry from the double-digit inflationary spiral your report would have us believe" (Schroeder).

Regarding CALPIRG's recommendation against bundling texts with ancillary materials, Schroeder stated in her letter to the PIRGs, "Professors often want Internet access, CDs, and other materials made possible by new technology, integrating them to enrich and enhance their courses. The integrated learning programs developed and maintained by publishers support opportunities for distance learning, making higher education available not only to students on campus but to students everywhere. ... Faculty members have told publishers they want and need the flexibility to deal with remediation and other special needs their students may have" (Schroeder). In other words, a textbook lacking these options may also lack competitive advantage because it fails to meet the needs of all learners.

Publishers claim that while bundled materials do cost more than the textbook alone, bundling results in a total package that costs less than all the components purchased separately. “These savings are obtained by every purchasing student, up-front, and can sometimes exceed the savings the student would receive from re-selling their used textbook,” wrote Schroeder in her official response to the 2005 GAO draft report on textbook costs. Further, the AAP maintained that faculty have always been able to order unbundled materials and in fact it is

considered bad practice in the industry to automatically bundle a textbook. ... In some cases, third-party agreements may make it impossible, per the contract, to offer an item separately from the textbook. In these instances, publishers would offer the textbook alone if faculty request, but this is generally not recommended because students’ ability to purchase the third-party materials, such as music, art and statistical software, would be difficult, if not impossible, and considerably more costly.” (“Key Information” 3)

In other words, the AAP maintains that one of the report’s suggestions is already in practice.

Issues raised in the PIRG reports: Revision cycle

Schroeder did not dispute CALPIRG’s findings about the frequency of new editions; indeed, the AAP agrees that the average time between editions is about four years (“Key Information” 4). However, the AAP maintains that “revision cycle information is readily available to faculty” and that “instructors provide publishers with significant input on the content and design of new editions” (“Key Information” 4), effectively stating that the third suggestion is also already common practice. Also according to the AAP,

80 percent of college instructors say it important that the material in texts used for their courses be as current as possible, according to a nationwide Zogby poll. The same survey found that 62 percent of college faculty members prefer to order texts with the most recent copyright date. ... In disciplines where core information may not change radically (e.g. chemistry, calculus), the application of that information or its relevance to a discussion can evolve significantly, requiring new treatment in the textbook and in instruction.” (“FAQ”)

While the average time between editions is four years,

some textbooks, such as medical, current events and technical books, may be on more frequent revisions (sic) cycles. The revision cycle is driven by a combination of faculty demand and changes in subject matter, teaching aids, pedagogy, and student needs. Additionally, publishers do not revise books unless there is a market for them. For example, the best seller in the Latin market has not been revised in almost six years. Moreland's *Intensive Latin* text, among the top 10 in this market, has not been revised in 28 years. ("Key Information" 5).

In an opinion piece in *Inside Higher Ed*, a senior lecturer in the school of business at the University of Texas wrote, "Out with the new and in with the old is not a formula for success. New editions of textbooks carry with them new and improved knowledge and information. As time goes on, authors and publishers find better examples to illuminate and explain information and ways to integrate them with the latest technologies." He expressed some sentiments similar to those of the PIRGs, such as encouraging faculty to "look more closely at lower cost options being offered by publishers, like paperback and streamlined books and custom editions." He did not share the students' enthusiasm for used books as a solution, saying,

To begin with, if every student were to buy only used textbooks then no new textbooks would be sold. Thus, no new textbooks would be produced, rapidly diminishing the quality of education. Second, one must consider why the market prices for new textbooks are increasing. Surprisingly, one of the major causes of higher priced new textbooks is the used textbook market. For example, if the fixed cost of producing a textbook is \$500,000 and 5,000 units of the book are sold each year for four years then each textbook would bear \$25 of the fixed cost. However, if, due to the used textbook market, only the first 5,000 units are sold and, in each of the remaining three years, these same 5,000 units are sold as used textbooks, then the publisher still has the \$500,000 in fixed costs spread out over only 5,000 books. Thus each new textbook bears \$100 of fixed costs, resulting in higher retail prices for all textbooks. (Brandl)

Issues raised in the PIRG reports: Supplements, book swaps, and book rentals

When the CALPIRG report requested that publishers increase the supply of used books (by producing supplements or addenda instead of new editions) and recommended that institutions invest in book rental programs and used-book swaps, it posed a direct challenge to publishers' source of revenue: new book sales.

To consider the publisher perspective on used and rented books, it may be helpful to understand that most of the biggest publishing houses are large corporations. A recent report on the newspaper industry noted, "Big profit margins on flat revenues ... suggest a stale industry to Wall Street. The investment community is now more focused on revenue growth (what they call the 'top line') ..." ("All the News"). A company's share price and its attractiveness to investors can be corporate life-and-death issues.

Used-book sales result in no revenues for the publisher, so for a publisher's revenues to increase, either numbers of new books sold must constantly increase, or per-unit prices of new books must increase, or both. At least 50 percent of a textbook's sales "usually occur in the first year after its publication" (Koch 7). Suggestions that colleges continue to use old editions of textbooks in order to improve the supply of used textbooks or that colleges facilitate the exchange of used books in online book swaps fail to address this basic problem for publishers: Used-book sales can have a devastating impact on revenues. Even if there is some truth to CALPIRG's assertion that frequent revision is a tactic employed to limit the sales of used books, the publishers' motives can at least be understood. If publishers' continued production of up-to-date, peer-reviewed, researched and edited textbooks has value to the learning process, these motives cannot be seen as entirely impure, as Brandl illustrated (above).

Issues raised in the PIRG reports: Digital editions

The CALPIRG report also suggested that online textbooks could provide relief to student purchasers. Publishers do produce electronic textbooks and proudly tout them as an option for students who want to avoid paying the costs associated with paper, ink, binding, transportation, and retail outlet operations. E-books do indeed have lower up-front prices than traditional print textbooks, and, not surprisingly, in another report the student PIRGs have studied these

offerings. In it, the PIRGs found that while digital textbooks should offer potential, they are, in practice, largely unacceptable. Upon close examination, most of the features the researchers identified as shortcomings are publishers' efforts to protect against piracy, a greater threat to publisher revenues when materials exist in digital form.

The PIRGs declared in their report that "digital textbooks must meet three criteria—affordable, printable and accessible" (Allen 4). Affordability was defined as "priced lower than the net cost of buying a textbook—the purchase price minus the amount the student can expect to receive for selling it back to the bookstore." Printability was an issue because the PIRGs found that most students preferred to read books in printed form. Accessibility referred to a book's availability off line or after the conclusion of the semester; the researchers found that nearly half of the students surveyed had limited computer access and that 71% had at some time chosen to keep a textbook rather than reselling it.

The student researchers studied e-textbooks offered through CourseSmart, an online seller of numerous publishers' e-books, and concluded that they failed to meet any of the criteria. In measuring affordability, the students found that e-textbooks cost "on average 39% more than a used hard copy of the same title bought and sold back online." Printing was limited to 10 pages per session, and the students found that printing a hard copy of half a textbook cost three times as much as buying a used book and reselling it. Further, students were required to choose to use the book either exclusively online or exclusively off line. Off-line e-books could be downloaded only for use on a single computer. Most of the e-books expired after 180 days (Allen 13).

In contrast, the PIRGs found that open textbooks—textbooks created and distributed online under an open license—were "digital done right." From a thrift-conscious perspective, there is certainly no downside. Open textbooks are free online, and they can be printed at will on personal computer printers or by a photocopy shop, or printed and bound by a print-on-demand service such as Lulu.com. They never expire and can presumably be perpetually updated. Open textbooks are nearly as free as the air we breathe—completely so, if a student is willing to read a book on a computer screen. How is this possible? The quick answer is that no publishing house is involved in their production.

AUTHOR PERSPECTIVES

Should publishers perish? Textbook authors and the Open Access movement

In the world of open-access publishing, authors self-publish, and they agree to forgo royalties and other payment for their work. Why would an author work for free? To understand this, one has to begin with a look at traditional academic journals, for the roots of the movement appear to be found there.

Authors have traditionally published articles in established, printed academic journals without compensation. Peter Suber, one of the leading voices in the Open Access movement, explains the motivation in an online article titled “Not Napster for Science”:

Scholars don’t just consent to relinquish payment and copyright. They are eager to publish—at least journal articles—even on these harsh terms. Nothing shows more clearly that they write journal articles for impact or influence, not revenue. Their interest lies in making a contribution to knowledge, partly for its own sake and partly because advancing knowledge will advance their careers. This explains why open access serves their interests, and why limiting access to paying customers (the traditional model in scholarly publishing and the RIAA model for music) would violate their interests.

Suber, who describes himself as “an independent policy strategist for open access to scientific and scholarly research literature,” is a senior researcher at the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), a Fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, and open access project director at Public Knowledge, among other posts. He has published an “Open-Access Overview” that defines features of the movement and its literature. This is an excerpt:

- Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.
 - OA removes *price barriers* (subscriptions, licensing fees, pay-per-view fees) and *permission barriers* (most copyright and licensing restrictions). The PLoS [Public

Library of Science] shorthand definition—“free availability and unrestricted use”—succinctly captures both elements.

- There is some flexibility about which permission barriers to remove. For example, some OA providers permit commercial re-use and some do not. Some permit derivative works and some do not. But all of the major public definitions of OA agree that merely removing price barriers, or limiting permissible uses to “fair use” (“fair dealing” in the UK), is not enough.

A recent article in the *Irish Times* describes the origins of the Open Access movement:

In the mid-1990s Peter Suber, a research professor of philosophy at Earlham College in the US, got on the internet and learned how to make web pages. Like many in academia, he decided to post his papers.

He was delighted with the response. “I was just playing with a new tool (html) and started receiving correspondences from philosophers,” he says. “I wrote for impact, and I was finally getting impact.”

He and others began to see the web as a way to bypass the publishers and speed the process of research.

There was no need to print and co-ordinate when scholars could self-organise and publish online, and best of all, there was no reason for people to pay to see the research that scholars wanted to spread as far and wide as possible.

The idea became the Open Access movement. A meeting in 2002 produced the Budapest Open Access Initiative, which defined Open Access as “Free availability on the public internet . . . without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself.” (Norton)

When the student PIRGs recommend adopting open textbooks where practical, they are recommending that faculty consider books whose authors have made them available free of price barriers, on a model like those of the open-access articles mentioned above. Such books do

exist, as do open course materials of other kinds. The open-textbook movement is inspired by the greater Open Access movement, but there is an important distinction: In the traditional model for textbook publication, authors have been compensated; in the open environment, authors agree to waive compensation.

Textbook authors who participate in open-access publishing cite a number of reasons for their decision.

- R. Preston McAfee, author of *Introduction to Economic Analysis: The Open Source Introduction to Microeconomics*, was dissatisfied with existing textbooks in his field and with the prevailing approach to teaching principles courses in economics; he also felt that in traditional publishing, textbook prices were ridiculously high and “the rapidity of new editions contributes to errors and bloat” On his Web site, he invites others in his discipline to contribute exercises or text to his book and expresses the hope that others will produce personalized versions for their own teaching that use his book as a “springboard.” He grants free use of the book “provided you don’t charge for it, and you make any additions or improvements to it available under the same terms. In addition, you must provide a link to my site on the first or top page of your version.”
- Douglas J. Amy, author of *Government is Good: An Unapologetic Defense of a Vital Institution*, published his book (which is not a textbook) online because “I could not find a popular press to take it on. And while a few university presses expressed interest, I was concerned that their relatively small budgets would mean little advertising and thus little readership by the general public” He found the advantages of open publishing to be larger readership, including readers from more than 50 countries; e-mailed feedback from readers; the ability to track readership with Web traffic software; greater availability to others for classroom use without expense or permission; and the ability to update or rewrite at any time without the effort of creating a completely new edition.

Most open-access works are published under a Creative Commons license (or something similar).

The Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting a different variety of copyright—not “all rights reserved,” but “some rights reserved.” Faculty can publish course materials and entire textbooks using the Creative Commons. If they do so, then in essence they must forgo all royalty payments. However, this will make their materials available at almost zero marginal cost to students everywhere. (Koch 20)

Lists of open textbooks are posted on a variety of online sites. These include the Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (<http://oerconsortium.org/>), California Institute of Technology’s CaltechBOOK (<http://caltechbook.library.caltech.edu/view/subjects/>), Flat World Knowledge (<http://flatworldknowledge.com>), Free Tech Books (<http://www.freetechbooks.com/>), The Assayer (<http://www.theassayer.org/>), the Wikibook project (http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Main_Page), and others.

Additionally, there are a variety of open-access learning modules that can be used in college courses. The Connexions Project at Rice University (<http://cnx.org/>) and MERLOT (<http://www.merlot.org/merlot/index.htm>) are both online libraries of open materials that faculty (and their students) may use online, organize into collections, print, and distribute.

Open-access authors report that open publishing does have some downsides. For example, Amy notes that readership is not automatic; authors must self-promote and create a site that does not look amateurish—both time-consuming and potentially expensive requirements (Amy). McAfee and others have observed that, in open-source environments, end users and even co-authors may not be able to access material if their software isn’t compatible. In her article “The Promise and Peril of ‘Open Access,’” Lila Guterman worries that open-access publishing, which often charges authors a fee for publication rather than charging readers a fee for access, can lead prolific writers and their institutions to spend more on open-access publishing than they currently spend on traditional journal subscription fees. Further, as noted in “Faculty Perspective,” creating open-access materials is fraught with responsibilities—not only to assure accuracy and quality, but also to maintain and update.

Examination of the positives and negatives of open-access publishing suggests that authors who embrace the Open Access movement must be willing not only to write a book for no compensation, but also to solicit the help of illustrators, designers, copy-editors, and perhaps others; to create and carry out a marketing campaign for their works; to update their works with ongoing revisions; and probably to study enough computer science to overcome technological hurdles and respond to the unforeseen consequences of software updates and incompatibilities. In other words, they must be willing to become a publishing house. Some are willing to do this in the interest of making knowledge more accessible, others because it offers a way to publish work that traditional publishers might decline to publish. Will they always be willing to do this much work without pay?⁴

Authors of commercially published texts

Not all authors are participating in the Open Access movement, of course. The authors of commercially published textbooks generally do receive compensation, and publishers retain all rights to the textbooks they publish. Traditional textbook authors are not motivated, like authors of journal articles, by a need to share new information with others in their discipline as broadly and quickly as possible, or necessarily by a desire more for exposure than for compensation, and they may not be at a point in their careers in which publishing the textbook will help them achieve tenure and other benefits. A random scanning of textbook author biographies suggests that many textbook authors base their work on teaching experience of twenty years or more. Many authors are already full professors. Some are even retired. It is possible, in some fields,

⁴ The impulse to include this delightful snippet from an interview with composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim is irresistible, so here it is:

Q: In the biography of you by Meryle Secrest that recently came out, it says that you originally agreed to be a co-lyricist on *West Side Story*.

SS: Yes. Lenny [Leonard Bernstein] wanted to write lyrics, too, and he was afraid of taking a chance on an unknown. So we worked together, but by the time we opened in Washington all the lyrics were mine, with some one- or two-line exceptions. And so he very generously took his name off the lyric writer list.

Q: Is it true that he offered you a little more percentage?

SS: Oh yeah. There was four percent of the gross for lyrics and music. ... Lenny was to get three, and I was to get one, and Lenny said, "We'll even it out, because you deserve..." buh-buh-ba, and I foolishly said, "Oh, don't be silly. All I care about is the credit." Somebody should have stuffed a handkerchief in my mouth, because it would have been nice to get that extra percent. ("Stephen Sondheim")

for textbooks to be written by adjunct faculty, celebrated authorities in a subject who teach as a fulfilling sidelight to distinguished careers outside academe. Textbook authors are not expanding the body of knowledge by publishing textbooks; in writing textbooks, they are choosing to offer, to others in the educational community, their own particular pedagogical approach.

The act of writing a textbook, even for an author with extensive teaching experience, requires a considerable commitment of time and effort. John Vivian, a professor at Winona State University and author of journalism textbooks, wrote in 2002:

For almost 20 years, before writing a textbook, I taught a freshman survey course. Student feedback was positive, and I felt I was doing a good job. In time I decided to draw on my lecture notes to write a textbook.

What an eye-opener!

My notes, although expanded and freshened up all the time over the years, were insufficient when put to the test of writing a comprehensive, coherent textbook. It had been possible in lectures, I later realized, to gloss over areas in which my background was modest, as is almost always the case in anybody's survey course. I had to bone up significantly to write some chapters.

Authors' comments about their compensation suggest that traditional textbook authorship is not wildly lucrative for most authors; eliminating author compensation alone, therefore, would not greatly change textbook prices. Vivian wrote in an article for the Society of Academic Authors, "A typical textbook earns the author less than \$3,000 over a five-year or longer period." (Vivian's book *The Media of Mass Communication* holds a Texty Award for excellence from the Text and Academic Authors Association.) Ralph Grabowski, an author of specialized computer textbooks, commented on his blog, "[P]ublishers every year look for ways to pay me less, even though my portion amounts to 5% (or less) of the book's list price."

Pressures on authors to earn less come not just from their publishers, but also from educational institutions, who occasionally claim some share of their faculty members' royalties, as well as others advocating that authors write for no payment. Vivian comments:

Today, when I dip into my files for concepts and examples for lectures, I draw more and more on my research from writing the book and updating new editions. The result is teaching that is better informed ... Shouldn't a college encourage faculty activities that strengthen teaching? Confiscating royalties discourages faculty members from writing textbooks by reducing the financial incentive. ...

Does a college deserve some benefit from the work of its faculty? Yes. Just as quality teaching contributes to a college's reputation, so do quality textbooks written by the faculty. The publisher's review process creates external documentation of a book's and an author's pedagogical excellence. For the title page to note that you are with your college should be enough.

Concerned about challenges to author compensation, organized groups like the Academic Writers Group, a subset of the Society of Authors, strive to raise awareness of the "miserable terms" paid to academic writers, a problem "especially now that secure academic tenure is increasingly a thing of the past, and academic funding based on publication will benefit a specific department or institution more than the writer."

Both Vivian and the Academic Writers Group appear to be suggesting that departments and universities benefit, perhaps even financially, when their reputations are burnished by faculty who have published textbooks. The faculty member who publishes books presumably brings the college a greater share of prestige, greater alumni pride, and larger financial contributions. He or she may also help the institution to recruit students—specifically, students who want to study with that renowned individual. Traditional authors argue that removing incentives that encourage experienced professors to write textbooks is not in the best interest of anyone—students, faculty, the entire college.

How do we assign value to things? Or to time? Or to expertise?

When the Student PIRGs advocate free-of-charge open textbooks as their most preferred solution to the problem of textbook prices, they depend upon the willingness of others to undertake a number of tasks without compensation. Not only must authors be willing to forgo royalties, but they must be willing to learn and perform the other jobs involved in publishing, or they must find others who will contribute those skills as volunteers, or they must undertake the effort of finding outside underwriters who will pay the editorial expenses associated with publishing. Students who request a switch to open textbooks are also asking their own professors to spend far more time critically assessing the suitability of course books, in effect performing the role of peer reviewer and sometimes performing the role of a publisher by identifying suitable peer reviewers for chapters outside the faculty member's own expertise.

Do students want to ask people to write, edit, and publish textbooks for free, because other information on the Internet is "free"? Over the past decade, consumers have been conditioned to expect free information on the Internet, a trend that is both inspiring the Open Access movement and creating much consternation in other publishing industries, such as newspapers and magazines. As computers are increasingly becoming required equipment at American colleges and universities, students may particularly question why they must buy the tool that will allow them free access to information on the Web and yet must also buy information presented in book form. This may particularly be true when faculty involved in the Open Access movement feel the same way about the Internet's promise of free access to information.

Textbooks, of course, are more than information. Textbooks have teaching styles, and textbook authors become co-teachers of the course material. Even if a faculty member does not explicitly assign readings from a textbook or write test questions that a student recognizes as having come from the textbook, a course textbook is a student's private tutor available at any time outside of class: a place to turn to find an expert voice that may explain things slightly differently (or simply one more time), to see illustrations that may make concepts clearer, or to practice and test new skills. A good textbook is not data; it is someone's pedagogical art. It is intellectual property.

When students leave college, they will embark on lives in which they may design new machines or buildings, write their own books, perform on the big screen, teach others, offer economic analyses, craft marketing campaigns, and otherwise develop or protect ideas—intellectual products—to earn a living. They may even covet the chance to work for a publishing house. The notion of intellectual property rights has been the foundation of strategies to monetize work that is done in the realm of ideas. Discovery, writing, research, invention, expertise, and fact checking have long been accepted as valuable; higher education’s own worth and credibility are rooted in the value of those concepts. In a nation whose most successful exports tend to be education, scientific breakthroughs, movies, music, books, video games, clothing designs, and other ideas, what would be the lasting implications of dismissing the value of work that produces intellectual property?

CONCLUSION

Discussions of textbook prices, and of materials that are alternatives to textbooks, easily become entangled with discussions of a shifting culture, shifting values, and the implications those changes hold for the future. Philosophizing about values does not, unfortunately, address the question of improving access for students who have genuine economic need and cannot afford either textbooks or iPhones—or of realizing Thomas Jefferson’s vision for education that is more easily accessible to all of us. Is it possible to modify the publishing industry in a way that lowers prices for educational materials without requiring workers to be replaced by volunteers, and without sacrificing academic quality or the rights of the teaching faculty to choose the most suitable textbooks from a slate of options?

While all of the task force recommendations that follow can alleviate the problems created by expensive textbooks, real change in textbook pricing will be difficult without a new business model. Although a notable exception exists (W.W. Norton is employee-owned), the dominant textbook publishers are publicly traded corporations, and stockholders do not necessarily contribute to student learning. The peculiarities of the stock market appear to drive a push for rising revenues, which appears to drive a number of publisher strategies that contribute to price increases. If that pressure were removed—if, for example, all the colleges and universities in the

United States, together, purchased an existing publishing house and took it off the stock exchange—what would happen?

Something approaching this idea has been launched by the Community College Consortium for Open Educational Resources (CCCOER), which has received grant support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to manage the Community College Open Textbook Collaborative (CCOTC) for two years (<http://oerconsortium.org/>). The CCOTC has published a list of open texts (and copyrighted texts that are not open but may be read free online), along with disclaimers that the CCOTC/CCCOER have not yet vetted the titles for quality or accuracy (<http://collegeopentextbooks.org/reviews.html>). The CCCOER's partnership with a for-profit publisher, Flat World Knowledge (FWK),

has provided unique insights into how commercial and non-profit models of open content creation and distribution might learn from each other, with the goal toward making non-profit OER entities more sustainable. FWK is a commercial publishing vendor in the open textbook space. FWK deploys the commercial authoring approach, creating a steady and high quality flow of content, combined with a strong marketing program focused on maximizing adoptions and usage. FWK hires recognized authors and scholars to create original textbook content. (Kanter and Baker 5)

Kanter and Baker report that FWK textbooks incorporate ancillaries, and they describe the books as customizable, searchable, interactive, developed with an editor, and subjected to organized peer review by paid reviewers. Students are able to read FWK textbooks for free online, or they may purchase their textbooks in other formats, such as print-on-demand, downloadable e-books, PDF files, etc.

Another new business model might be to provide intellectual property payments to publishers and authors, even on sales of used books. Such a system might help to make used books and electronic versions of books less threatening to publishers and authors. One interesting proposal, published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, calls for making a distinction between a book's physical form and its intellectual content (Granof). Author Michael Granof's proposal calls for an intellectual content license to be paid to publishers any time a textbook is used, whether

students purchase books new, used, or online, or even borrow or rent them. He estimates the fee could be around \$9. Then students could purchase any physical version of the book they choose and pay only the cost associated with the book's physical production (in addition to the content license fee)—or borrow the book and pay nothing for the physical form. Publishers would not be threatened by the used book market or even by piracy.

Another proposal for a new business model, also published in the *Chronicle*, calls for a single online source for textbooks. "It's time to shift the text-selling system from one between publishers and students to one between publishers and colleges," Joseph Storch wrote in his commentary. He continued,

A consortium-style agreement between the latter two groups would make it advantageous for all publishers and higher-education institutions to participate. The consortium could charge participating colleges a single price for unlimited access, based on their number of full-time enrollments, or FTE's. Each college could then pass that charge on to students as part of tuition or through a dedicated fee, or even seek private donors to help defray the cost.

Institutions acting as single payers on behalf of their students would create cost efficiencies, allowing each student to pay a lower net cost for the single digital source than for purchasing textbooks individually. With the cost included in tuition or charged as a dedicated fee, students could then use financial aid to pay for access. ...

The key to making a single-price system rewarding for publishers would be a pricing structure based on both market share and royalty payments. Each publishing company, journal, or other content provider would receive a percentage of an institution's enrollment fee based on their market share, and when students select material, the provider would receive a royalty in the form of a "micropayment." ... Since all enrolled students would have unlimited access, there would be little incentive to share the materials illegally. ... There would be no secondary market for used books, in which publishers receive nothing, and no more incentive to meaninglessly update textbooks simply to sell new editions.

Another solution for reducing the cost of course materials for students is to allow students to rent course materials. Most rental options are complex since there are added variables in the acquisition of the correct course materials for each course. Rental options require students to locate a vendor that has the course materials for each course and to ensure the material is the correct edition. Many first semester freshmen lack the knowledge to use rental options, and other students may have difficulty locating course materials from a single vendor for all of their courses.

A potential solution for these problems is to have the college act as the agent for rental of course materials. Renting course materials in the campus store would allow students to have access to materials for all of their courses. Furthermore, it would be the responsibility of the campus store to have the correct editions of the course materials. The most significant obstacle to such a rental program is the capital needed to purchase textbooks prior to rental. This obstacle could be eliminated by having the student place a down payment that is equal to the actual cost of the course material. At the end of the course, the student would then return the course materials for a refund. The refund would be a monetary amount that would allow the program to be self funded over the cycle of the course material.

The accompanying chart illustrates how such a program could operate without additional cost to the college and at a significant savings for the students in the course.

Hypothetical Course

Projected enrollment per regular semester	500
Projected Summer Enrollment each summer	250
Textbook cost	\$100.00
Student investment	\$100.00
Refund to student at the end of a semester	\$ 70.00
Actual cost to the student Cost	\$ 30.00
Rental fee (administrative cost to operate program)	30%
Semesters textbook is used	4
Summer semesters textbook is used	2
Total student investment per course	\$250,000
Total refund to students	\$175,000
Total revenue / cost to operate this program	\$ 75,000

In this example, a student makes a down payment for a textbook that is equal to the actual cost of the textbook. After the course is completed, the student returns the textbook to the college store and receives a refund for 70% of the initial cost. Thus, the student has rented the textbook for 30% of the actual cost. If the textbook is used for two years (four regular semesters and two summer semesters), the college will be able to refund 70% of the cost of the textbook every semester without a loss to the college. If the cycle of selecting new course material is longer than two years, the refund to students could be higher than 70%.

Since the sale of materials would decline, publishers and authors would not benefit from the rental proposal, but the proposal would have a positive impact on most stakeholder groups. Students would be able to rent course materials on campus at a significantly lower price than purchasing course materials. Faculty would still be able to select course materials deemed necessary for courses. Colleges would meet student demand for lower costs for course materials.

But while all of these solutions can help lower the cost of course materials, the insufficiency of financial aid (see the “Overview” section of this report) can force many students to decide that textbooks, at any price, are unaffordable. Any solution, therefore, that does not make course materials free will be inadequate for those students with the greatest need, unless accompanied by an increase in financial aid.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Tulsa Community College Alternative Course Materials Task Force does not support a radical change to electronic course materials, the task force recognizes that the digital environment is fundamentally changing how information is being created, delivered, and used in the academic setting. Rising costs will continue to have a significant impact on each stakeholder. Faculty, whose primary concern is student learning, need to determine which options best address these changes and enhance learning. With that learning-focused emphasis in mind, the task force has adopted the following recommendations:

1. The primary purpose of course materials, including but not limited to textbooks, is to enhance the learning experience. Any proposal concerning the cost of course materials **should have a positive impact on the learning experience.**
2. Research indicates a need to educate the various stakeholder groups about the complexity of the problem of costs of course materials. A primary task of colleges, therefore, is to ensure each stakeholder group has detailed information about the complexity of this problem.
3. Any proposal concerning the cost of course materials should consider the short-term and long-term impact the proposal could have on the primary stakeholders. A proposed solution that considers only the views of one stakeholder group is likely to have a detrimental impact on the learning experience.
4. Full-time faculty members who teach a course should determine which materials are required.

- Faculty within a discipline are encouraged to collaborate voluntarily in the selection of course materials, especially for large-enrollment courses and courses that span more than one semester.
 - Faculty are encouraged to consider student input in the adoption process for course materials.
 - Full-time faculty should consider part-time faculty needs when selecting course materials.
 - If feasible, faculty should collaborate with colleagues at other institutions to select common course materials and to negotiate with publishers to bring costs down.
 - Faculty should collaborate on learning objectives for courses where appropriate in order to simplify the selection of course materials.
5. Those responsible for selecting and obtaining course materials should negotiate for the lowest feasible price and should encourage competition among vendors by considering products from different sources.
6. Faculty should be required to list the price and ISBN numbers of all course materials within the course syllabus. At least one week prior to the start of the course, colleges should make ISBN numbers and prices for course materials available to students. These can be made available in a variety of ways:
- Faculty can post syllabi online or provide print copies to students prior to the start of class.
 - Bookstores can publish ISBN numbers and prices on their Web sites.
 - Semester schedules can list ISBN numbers and prices.
 - Division or department offices can provide ISBN numbers and prices for materials.
7. Faculty should be required to indicate within the course syllabus the extent to which each course material will be used in the course.

8. Colleges should require publishers to provide all full- and part-time faculty with complimentary copies of all course materials.
9. Colleges should require publishers to provide complimentary copies of course materials for student use on campus. The number of complimentary copies should be equal to at least 10% of the enrollment in the course.
10. Colleges should take steps to aggressively prevent copyright infringement by each stakeholder group.
11. Colleges should provide adequate access (24/7) to computers and software for all courses that utilize any form of e-books or technology-based course materials.
12. Faculty **should not accept any form of gratuity** from publishers/vendors related to the selection of course materials.
13. Colleges should provide adequate incentives and professional development opportunities (financial compensation, reduced teaching assignments, travel to conferences) to research, develop and update alternative course materials.
14. Faculty should consult professional staff such as librarians for help finding high-quality alternative course materials.

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