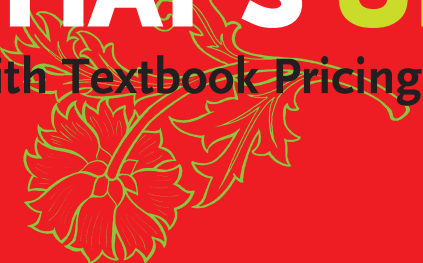


WHAT'S UP

With Textbook Pricing?



After shelling out big bucks for tuition, room and board, and other college expenses, students may be taken aback by the prices on textbooks for class. National statistics show students spend hundreds of dollars each year on textbooks- and they're not happy about it.

According to old campus newspapers, students were complaining about textbook prices back in the 1930's, when the average textbook cost about \$3. Things haven't changed. Today's students are still raising questions about why textbooks cost as much as they do. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions and answers.

Why is the store gouging me? Textbook prices are so high, I know the store is making a ton of money.

In reality, the bookstore doesn't make much on textbooks. On average, 64.6% of the sticker price on new books goes back to the publisher, mostly to cover development of the books and normal business expenses. The author gets about 11.6% in royalties. The freight company that shipped the book gets 1.3%. The rest goes to the bookstore, but out of that amount the store has to pay for staff wages and benefits; insurance and taxes; electricity, heat, water, and AC; checkout systems; shelving; office and storage equipment; security; rent; cleaning and repairs; supplies; and other expenses. In the end, on average, just 6.5 cents (before taxes) on every dollar you pay for new textbooks represents profit to the store.

Why doesn't the store pick cheaper books?

The store is not involved in textbook selection. Your instructors spend many hours reviewing dozens, maybe hundreds, of books to find just the right ones for your courses. They then tell the store which books to order.

Your bookstore does put a lot of effort into keeping textbook prices as affordable as possible, like encouraging faculty to make their book decisions early so that the store has time to search out more used copies.

But novels and other books don't cost as much as text books. Textbooks are not like novels or general-interest nonfiction books, which can be sold to a broad audience. Most textbooks are specialized and will be purchased by only a relatively small number of people. Also, textbooks require considerably more time and effort to develop. To ensure accuracy, they must undergo rigorous academic review and fact-checking, and must be updated every few years to stay current.

Photos, colour, graphs, charts, exercises, and quizzes also add to the production cost of textbooks. Students say these graphics aren't important, especially if they make books more expensive. But sales histories tell a different story. Instructors are more likely to choose textbooks with contemporary, inviting graphics, and students are more likely to buy them.

Some textbooks are shrinkwrapped with extras I don't need or use. Why does the store make me pay for these?

These ancillary materials have been developed by the publisher, and are normally included with the book at no extra cost to students. These supplementary materials are intended to help you succeed with the class. In most cases, the publisher does not offer the textbook alone, and the bookstore must buy the entire package. Because the package is a set, most publishers require stores to return unsold packages with all materials and shrinkwrap intact.