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Textbook Affordability: An Update

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from the standard \$67 replacement cost to \$300 and billing users for replacements costs once the item is 24 hours overdue. After emailing and calling the student for seven days overdue, we now work with the Assistant Dean of Students and the Director of the Office of Student Conduct to help resolve the issue. Having this extra level of University involvement has helped us resolve all but one of these rare situations.

Finally, awareness continues to be a challenge. As mentioned previously, we have instituted a more proactive outreach program, issuing title lists to the subject librarians well in advance of the semester so that they can reach out directly to affected faculty. Reaching out to faculty directly remains our top marketing strategy, since faculty can then notify students in their syllabus or during the first week of class. That said, we also refer students to the program when they ask at a library service desk if the library has their textbooks.

Evaluating Success

Thus far, the Libraries have assessed our success in terms of overall usage numbers, which have steadily increased over time. We are also pleased to hear anecdotal reports of TextSelect being used and valued, for example in "Top 3 Reasons I Can't Live without My Library" video submissions from a 2016 University Libraries contest.¹ Beyond this kind of assessment, in the past year our Assessment & Planning Officer has begun analyzing the data more completely, looking more comprehensively at usage and expenditure trends, and the value offered by this program. As part of her initial assessment, she identified the highest usage by STEM and School of Business courses, and mostly during the first four weeks of the semester. She plans to continue examining data from additional terms and may even survey TextSelect users directly. This in-depth analysis, combined with our ongoing efforts to streamline workflows and maintain the highest levels of service, will help the Libraries develop strategies to continue and improve the TextSelect program. 🍀

Endnotes

1. <http://library.gmu.edu/top3/videos>

Textbook Affordability: An Update

by **Monica Metz-Wiseman** (Director, Academic Resources, University of South Florida Libraries, University of South Florida, LIB122, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., Tampa, FL 33620; Phone: 813-974-9854; Fax: 813-974-2296) <monica@usf.edu> lib.usf.edu

Over the past six years, the **University of South Florida (USF) Libraries** have been working to address the issue of textbook affordability for **USF** students and faculty. As textbook and course material costs continue to rise exponentially, students struggle to afford these materials. Students are making tough choices between textbooks and essentials such as food and prescription medicine.

The rising cost of textbooks is also contributing to student debt in the U.S., debt that has now reached record levels. **USF** also has the distinction of having a high percentage of students (42%) with need-based Pell Grants. With heightened attention placed on the issue by the Florida legislature, **USF** administration is also taking notice of this issue. At **USF**, our work with textbook affordability is more highly valued now than ever. Back in November of 2014, **USF** reported in *The Charleston Advisor* on the year-long Internet2/EDUCAUSE E-Textbook Pilots. These three semester-long pilots laid out a road map for **USF** based on surveys of students and faculty that analyzed whether etextbooks could equal or surpass the value of print textbooks within the context of teaching and learning. That answer was yes, but price point was key to that acceptance. Participation in the pilots also resulted in direct savings of over \$553,000 for students. But what is **USF** doing now to help support students and faculty with the affordability of course materials, and where is this work headed?

The Textbook Affordability Project (TAP) at **USF** is the umbrella for any initiative that supports textbook affordability on behalf of our students. As our primary means of communication, we have a website (<http://tap.usf.edu>) that provides information on services, news, tools, and collections. Social media, in-person outreach at campus events, multi-media presentations, bookmarks, and brochures all serve to spread the word on how we are trying to help our students. Direct access to affordable materials comes by way of four initiatives. These initiatives are: Online Course Reserve, Print Textbooks on Reserve program, Ebooks in the Classroom, and our Open Textbook Initiative.

Based on a survey of our faculty that resulted in a response of 424 out of 2,090 faculty, we learned that faculty place a high value on a robust online course reserve system that integrates with the course management system. To that end, we acquired ARES to ensure a user-friendly

online course reserve environment, and we have continued to fund it over the past four years. The result? More **USF** faculty are using Online Course Reserve, and more content is being added than ever before. The **USF Libraries** also funded three years of the **Copyright Clearance Center** Academic License to help to ensure copyright compliance. The aim of this work is to provide scaffolding for faculty that would allow them to shed textbook requirements in favor of course readings on Online Course Reserve.

The aim of the Print Textbooks on Reserve program is to acquire at least two textbooks for courses with a combined enrollment of over 100 students. These textbooks can be loaned for three hours. With funding from the University to acquire textbooks, we are now supporting a combined enrollment of 59,000 students in over 2,300 course sections with access to more than 1,100 textbooks. These textbooks were used more than 35,000 times in the past year. Supplemented by donations from publishers and faculty, the current value of this collection is over \$140,000 with an investment of \$30,000.

Ebooks in the Classroom is another cost-savings program for our students. Faculty submit requests to the **USF Libraries** to acquire ebooks adopted either as recommended or required reading for courses. Eligible courses can be at the undergraduate or graduate level. A great deal of attention is paid to acquiring ebooks with the least restrictive digital rights. To date, the **USF Libraries** have saved students over \$1.4 million in textbook costs by making the ebooks that serve as textbooks accessible online at no cost to the students.

Within the past year, the **USF Libraries** and **USF** Innovative Education have partnered to fully fund and publish our first open access textbook. Working with a faculty member, **Jenifer Schneider** from the College of Education, *The Inside, Outside, and Upside Downs of Children's Literature: From Poets and Pop-ups to Princesses and Porridge* was published in the spring of 2016. While **Jenifer** was certainly mindful of saving students' money, she also wanted to create something innovative and interactive. Making an imaginative use of multi-media to help the reader understand this content, there are twelve videos that accompany each chapter. As **Jenifer** teaches large sections of a popular Children's Literature course, the potential savings over the span of three semesters will be \$180,000 for **USF** students. Published under a **Creative Commons** license, this textbook is now open to the world. The **USF Libraries** also host on our institutional repository, Scholar Commons, twelve open textbooks authored by **USF** faculty. The textbook *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices* by **Anol Bhattacharjee** is the most downloaded publication on Scholar

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Collaboration Is Key to Innovative Textbook Affordability Solutions

by **Robert A. Walton** (CEO, National Association of College Stores, Oberlin, OH 44074) <rwalton@nacs.org>

Libraries have long been leaders of collaboration in higher education. Librarians frequently jump into a leadership role and act as catalysts for their colleges and universities, nimbly adopting, and then helping faculty and students adapt to new ideas and processes for improving how they access, compile, and use information. At no time has this knowledge of the variety of content and formats been more critical than today, as technology fuels the proliferation of options, and increasing costs push higher-education institutions to evaluate how learning content is sourced, selected and priced, and how it ultimately contributes to student success. John Naisbitt's populist quote increasingly rings true; the students of today are "...drowning in information but starved for knowledge."

It's a tall order, finding the sweet spot that upholds faculty requirements while meeting the cost expectations and learning preferences of students. Options that run the gamut from print and electronic textbooks to digital media to course packs and Open Educational Resources (OER) must be considered through a lens of other issues that include publishing costs, content licensing, and budget constraints. While technology offers many options, today's faculty span several generations of teaching styles. The intersections of pedagogy and technology strategy are inconsistent and frequently inelegant. Librarians and other campus stakeholders stand in the center of an increasingly complex challenge.

Fortunately, no single department has to shoulder this alone. Forward-thinking groups at campuses across the country are forming partnerships to pool their ideas and resources. They're developing solutions to satisfy students and faculty, as well as administrators, as they improve quality and availability of learning content while working within budget limitations and even reducing costs.

Libraries and Bookstores Lead the Charge

Who is leading these successful collaborations? In many cases, it's libraries and campus bookstores. As a lifelong librarian and now an advocate for the college store, I believe that these two core functions in higher education share many of the same goals and challenges. These groups are finding that, working together, they are well positioned to engage stakeholders, particularly faculty and the administration, to take a holistic approach to textbook affordability.

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Commons with 336,806 downloads to date. We are now in the midst of creating our second fully funded open textbook which focuses on probability and statistics, with faculty member **Kingsley Reeves** from the College of Engineering. He is participating in this program as he too wants to create an interactive textbook with multi-media that helps not only students at **USF** understand the concepts of probability and statistics, but also students around the world.

Where are we headed next in our attempt to help our students better afford classroom materials? We are exploring the development of programs similar to Affordable Georgia and **Temple University's** Alternate Textbook Project where financial incentives are awarded to faculty who move to an open access textbook or adopt library content in lieu of a commercially published textbook. We will join the **Open Textbook Network** through the **University of Minnesota** and develop a database of ebooks similar to the one created at **UNC Charlotte** for possible adoption. Finally, we are currently analyzing how best to negotiate with commercial textbook publishers for e-textbooks on our campuses. Our commitment to textbook affordability for students at **USF** not only continues but has intensified to match the growing importance of this issue to students, faculty, administrators, and now Florida lawmakers. 🌱

While much opportunity presents itself, these collaborations are still the exception rather than the norm at most campuses. Traditionally, libraries and bookstores have worked independently of each other. In part this has been due to organizational boundaries reflective of separate reporting lines, with libraries reporting through the core academic program and stores through auxiliary or enterprise/business services. The issue of licensing often has stood between these two groups as well, with some disagreement as to whether licensing costs should be absorbed by the library or passed along to the student through the bookstore. Until recently, many librarians simply didn't think to reach out to the bookstore as a collaborative partner.

"Mapping the Learning Content Ecosystem," a research project led by **The National Association of College Stores (NACS)** last year, bears this out. When asked to name the key players in the evolution of course materials, librarians seldom mentioned the campus store. If they had no prior working relationship with the campus store, the potential for partnership didn't even occur to them. However, campus librarians who had engaged with their institution's store said they were open to, and enthusiastic about, future joint ventures.

As these librarians share their experiences, others are following suit, pushing organizational boundaries aside and letting go of restrictive historical models to identify and implement textbook affordability programs.

Case Study: University of Kansas

A great example of a collaborative effort led by the library and bookstore comes from the **University of Kansas (KU)**, Lawrence. Roughly six years ago, as budget cuts were becoming increasingly common in higher education, **KU** formed a digital content collaboration committee including representatives of the library, campus bookstore, IT, and instructional learning. The committee's goal was to develop and implement a program for providing course materials that would reduce costs by leveraging each entity's resources and capabilities.

One issue the committee addressed was determining whether the money paid by the library to secure copyrights for its e-reserves program was well spent. In other words, should the library continue to spend its limited budget on e-reserves that were requested by faculty in place of or to supplement course materials? Without metrics to determine whether or how many students were accessing the e-reserve content, the library had difficulty assessing whether the cost of buying copyrights was justified.

Following careful analysis, the library determined that it should save the money spent on faculty requested e-reserve copyrights. Instead, the bookstore would create custom course packs, incorporating the content previously requested as an e-reserve. This solution shifted the payment of copyright fees for course-specific e-reserves from the library to the bookstore but only when a course pack was purchased by a student.

Committee members worked out a process between the library and bookstore to help them transition from e-reserves to course packs, and put a system in place to identify copyrights already held, thus eliminating duplicate purchases. Additionally, they communicated this change to faculty members, helping them understand and support the change.

Case Study: Simon Fraser University

At **Simon Fraser University** in British Columbia, collaborative efforts between the library and bookstore began about five years ago, as a task force of representatives responsible for classroom support and curriculum development began exploring the options and issues surrounding the delivery of course materials.

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