

# High textbook prices rip-off or not?

## Bookstore policy frustrates students

By KAREN KANGAS  
Of the Emerald

"Essentials of Life and Health"	\$8.05
"Human Biology and Behavior"	\$12.55
"German Review"	\$8.95
"Physical Science in the Modern World"	\$13.45

That comes to \$43.00, please.  
Sigh.

The cost of textbooks is a constant source of frustration to students. At the University, many students wonder if the high prices are due to the campus bookstore's corner on the local textbook market.

"I can't say whether the (bookstore's) prices are fair or not," says James Brauer, a pre-med major. "I don't know of any other place that sells the books I need, so I can't compare prices. The bookstore pretty well has a monopoly, so they can sell the books at just about any price they want."

Otto Henrickson, manager of the bookstore's textbook operation, explains that, though the store does have a corner on the textbook market, it is a nonprofit organization and mainly interested in helping the students.

"Our primary purpose is the textbook operation," he points out. "It's existence is an absolute necessity to the student, so this is where we give the 'breaks' to the students."

The "breaks" come through a ten per cent discount on all texts. When the bookstore purchases a number of books, it gets a buyers' discount from the publisher. This discount is usually 20 per cent less than the suggested selling price (list price) of the texts. If a bookstore sells the book at the list price, it would make a 20 per cent profit. The University Bookstore, however, splits its 20 per cent discount with the students and sells texts at a ten per cent discount.

Henrickson explains, "If a book has a list price of \$3.95, just about every bookstore in the country would sell it for \$3.95. The University store, however, would buy the books at the discount price of \$3.16 each and sell them for \$3.56.

The ten per cent the store keeps goes toward

expenses — transportation, building mortgage and employe salaries.

"Theoretically, at the end of the year, the store breaks even," Henrickson says. "In no way do we make any profit off of textbooks."

Students aware of the bookstore's nonprofit status still question the high price of texts.

Henrickson explains that publishers base their prices on the amount of work taken to compile the book and the production costs.

Jack Maddex, history professor, says publishers raise the price of books aimed for course adoption because "they think they have a captive market. They don't expect anybody to buy these books other than students who are assigned them for a course."

Frustrated by these prices, students often become angry with their professors for assigning expensive texts. Maddex says that, though professors consider the price of texts when compiling reading lists, they tend to let the quality of the books be the deciding factor.

"Obviously you want the books that are going to do the job best," says Maddex, "but it's responsible for the professor to try to figure out how much he or she is asking the student to spend."

Prof. James Klonoski, political science, says he doesn't look at prices when compiling a book list, but limits himself to paperbacks only and assumes this will keep the price down.

The problem of cost also concerns students when they sell their used texts back to the University Bookstore. One student terms the buy-back system a "rip-off." Harvey Ando, a biology major, refused to sell his used texts to the bookstore because of the "raw deal" he feels he will get. "At the University of Hawaii they (the campus bookstore) used to buy back books at one-fifth the original price," he says.

Henrickson believes students will get a good deal if they bring their used texts to the University Bookstore. "If students want the best deal, I think they should come here," he says. "We buy books at half the original price and sell them at three-fourths (of the original price) less ten per cent all the way through. Those prices are a universal rule-of-thumb."

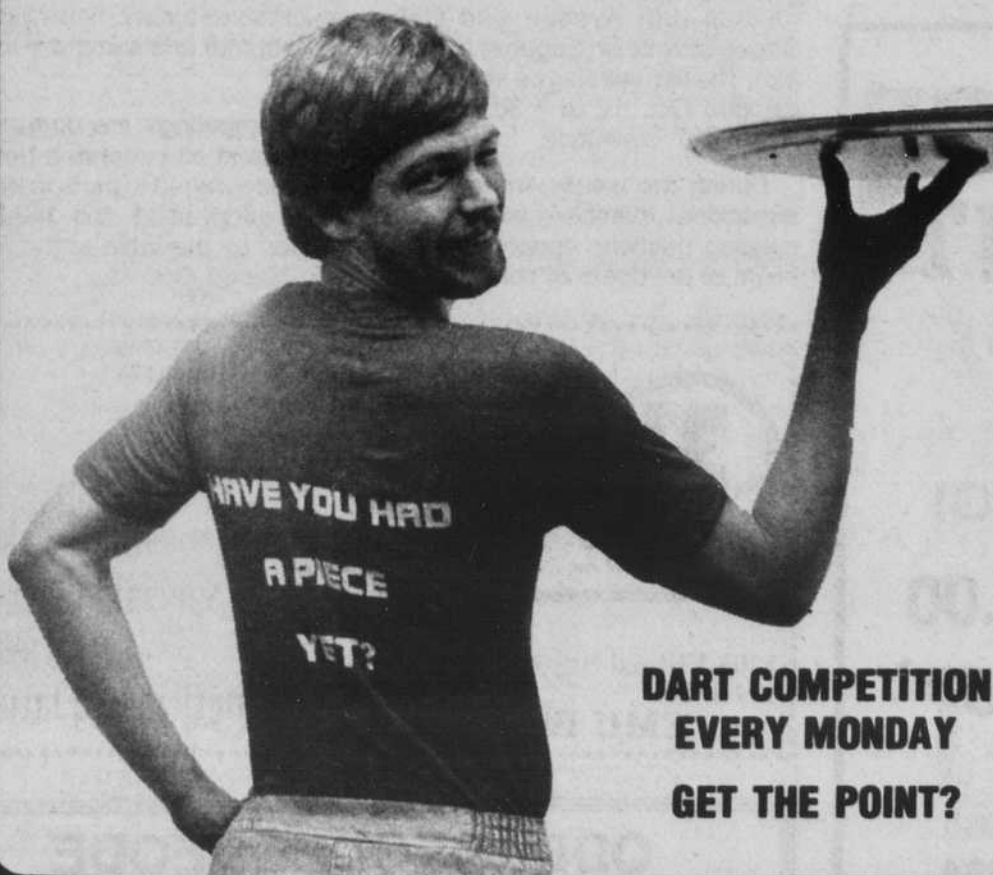


Photo by Steve Scher

Many students complain about the price of textbooks offered exclusively by the University Bookstore.

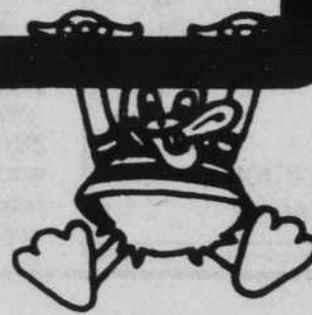
GET YOUR PIECE AT

# Monty's!



**DART COMPETITION  
EVERY MONDAY  
GET THE POINT?**

# Monty's PIZZA



**ON FRANKLIN  
Across From Williams Bread  
SAVE TIME! CALL FIRST  
485-6166**

**STUDENT SPECIAL!  
1/2 PRICE PIZZA  
EVERY TUESDAY THRU OCTOBER**

With Student I.D.

Limit: One Per Customer