

# Students favor 'lighter' books

## Dead Cats, Garp sell well

By Dane Claussen  
Of the Emerald

The books that sell the best at the University Bookstore and bestsellers among college students nationwide are "somewhat similar and somewhat different," says Thom Chambliss, trade book manager at the Bookstore.

A list of the 10 most popular books among college students during 1981, published in "The Chronicle of Higher Education," listed as the top five: "The Official Preppy Handbook," edited by Lisa Birnbach; "101 Uses for a Dead Cat," by Simon Bond; "What Color is Your Parachute?," by Richard Nelson Bolles; "Garfield Gains Weight," by Jim Davis; and "The Simple Solution to Rubik's Cube," by James Nourse.

"Garfield," "Dead Cat," and "Preppy" all have sold well at the bookstore, according to Chambliss, but the sale of the Preppy book — "a flash-in-the-pan" — has "died in the last six months."

The store, which gets 90 percent of its business from University students, sells about 50 copies a year of the frequently updated "What Color is Your Parachute?," a guide for finding jobs, he says.

The University Bookstore carries all 10 of the popular books, Chambliss says.

The second five favorites named by the Chronicle are "Princess Daisy," by Judith Krantz; "Rage of Angels," by Sidney Sheldon; "A Confederacy of Dunces," by John Toole; "The Third Wave," by Alvin Toffler; and "Garfield Bigger Than Life," by Jim Davis.

### Popular fiction sells poorly

Not including textbooks, the Bookstore stocks about 30,000 titles, one-fourth of which wouldn't be sold if the bookstore had profit as a main objective, Chambliss says.

"Rage of Angels" has been a particularly poor seller among nationally popular books at the bookstore, Chambliss says, explaining that "current popular fiction doesn't sell well from our store."

One of a few exceptions was "The World According to Garp," by John Irving, a bestseller at the store two

years ago. A "bestseller" at the store means it sells 10 copies, Chambliss says.

The bookstore staff read advanced copies of "Garp," liked it, and promoted it, he says. Bookdealers "tend to read a lot of books," and 90 percent of them liked Irving's bestseller, he says.

"Our buyers don't buy books because they're bestsellers," Chambers says, adding that since many students have little time to read books "outside the curriculum," they won't read a book only because of its celebrity status.

The bestseller at the University Bookstore this year? "A Light in the Attic," by Shel Silverstein, a book of poetry and "silly verse" that has sold about 150 copies.

Other bestselling volumes have been reduced-price "remainders" and architecture books, blank books, humorous books, and psychology books.

### 'Harlequins' don't last long

Chambliss concurs with the Chronicle's contention that students are reading "lighter" books now than several years ago.

The number of sociology books the store carries is now about one-third of what it stocked seven years ago. Several other social science sections also are smaller.

Three years ago, the store sold no Harlequin Romance novels, Chambliss says. Now it can't keep enough on the shelves.

Several professors have expressed displeasure at the trend, but the situation simply reflects sales and society, he says.

"If we tried to stick with intellectual books, we'd lose money."

Other area bookstores' customers appear to have different tastes.

Gary Sherp, book buyer for the Son of Koobdooga bookstore, 651 E. 13th Ave., says his store sells what he calls "better quality" books and has a diverse group of patrons.

Bestsellers at the store range from "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," by Douglas Adams, to the autobiography of Georgia O'Keefe to "In Search of Reagan's Brain," a book compiled from Garry Trudeau's



Photo by Bob Baker

The University Bookstore caters to students' book-buying tastes, which have shifted in recent years from social science, political science and philosophy to humor, puzzle and "preppy" books.

Doonesbury comic strip.

The store has sold bestsellers listed by the Chronicle, but sales are light because the "store has a different reputation," and doesn't sell primarily to college students, Sherp says.

For instance, the store has the largest selection of Penguin Classics in Eugene, often used for University classes but not bestsellers. One recent bestseller at the store has been "Bride's Head Revisited" by Evelyn Waugh — first published in 1945.

At the Smith Family Bookstore, 768 E. 13th Ave., owner Delbert Smith points out subject areas that are popular or shunned by his customers, the majority of whom are college students.

Currently, books on media and communications, films and photography, Doonesbury comics, and picture books are popular, he says.

John Irving books, Hunter Thompson books, English and foreign language dictionaries and "non-fiction novels" — by such authors as Tom Wolfe — also

are sought after, Smith says.

Unpopular book topics — especially those that formerly sold well — are science fiction, most social sciences, cookbooks concentrating on vegetarianism and other "fad books." The popularity of mystery, art, gardening and plant books also has dropped considerably, he says.

Psychology books, except for "how to" books for the "me generation" are out of vogue, Smith says. He couldn't sell books about Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan even during the 1980 election year, he adds.

Among those titles experiencing new-found or continuing popularity are books by Karl Jung, Ken Kesey, and Barry Lopez; "Hotel New Hampshire" and "The World According to Garp," both by John Irving; "The Milagro Beanfield War," by John Nichols; "One Hundred Years of Solitude," by Gabriel Marquez; and "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance," by Robert Pirsig, he says.

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