

Textbook prices rise 10 percent annually

Publishers, bookstore markups figure heavily in costs

By Debbie Myers
 ■ The University Daily Kansan
 U. of Kansas

When it comes to textbooks, Josepha Lara shops around.

Lara, a senior at the U. of Kansas, said she checked prices at the KU bookstores and other places to find the best deals on books each semester.

Like thousands of other college students, Lara is frustrated by high purchase prices and low sell-back prices.

Charles Thodt, director of industry information and research for the National Association of College Stores in Oberlin, Ohio, said the prices textbook publishers collected and the amount bookstores added to cover their costs made up the largest part of textbook prices.

Those prices have risen by 10 percent each year during the past 10 to 12 years, Thodt said.

He said the average student at a four-year institution spent about \$463.35 for a year's supply of books during fiscal year 1988.

Undergraduate students at KU spend about \$300 each semester on books and basic supplies for a 15-hour class load, said Bill Getz, assistant manager for books at the campus bookstores. Currently, in-state tuition at KU runs \$1,564 per year. Textbook costs there equal about 19 percent of total tuition costs annually.

Mike Reid, manager of the KU bookstores, said students could keep textbook costs down by buying used books, selling their books at the end of the semester and using the student dividend program, which allows KU students to receive a percentage of their bookstore receipts back at the end of the semester.

Reid said during the 44 years the KU bookstores have used the dividend program, more than \$2 million has been paid to students. Since 1988, the bookstores have

paid students 7 percent of the amount of a semester's cash register receipts, he said.

Used books at the campus bookstores cost about 25 percent less than new books, Reid said.

He said the bookstores buy books back for half the new book value if they will be used the next semester. If the books are not being used the next semester at the university, a wholesale book company buys them for 10 to 40 percent of their retail value.

Senior Kurt Skinner said he was disappointed with low sell-back prices, especially for soft-cover books.

"One semester's use and they're practically valueless to the student, and the bookstore is able to sell them back and get their value many times over," Skinner said.

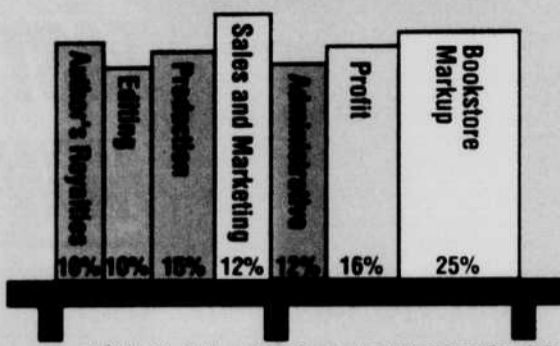
Stephen Goldman, associate professor of English, is the co-author of a textbook that has been available at the bookstores for three years.

Goldman said any royalties he receives from sales of his book at KU are sent to the New York Zoological Society.

"I don't feel that I should get any royalties for any book sold at KU, and this was my way to avoid a conflict of interest," he said.

Textbook Costs

What makes up the cost of the average textbook? Here's a breakdown of costs for texts published by companies that are members of the American Association of Publishers or the National Association of College Stores.



SOURCE: The College Stores Research and Educational Foundation

BRETT BRENNER, THE UNIVERSITY DAILY KANSAN, U. OF KANSAS

Goldman said he thought most faculty members wrote textbooks so they could teach their classes the way they wanted.

"Things have just gotten horribly out of control," Goldman said. "(The cost of textbooks is) very definitely a factor in what it costs a student to go to school now."

PICKING AND CHOOSING

Customized reading . . . Rather than spending a large amount of money on a tremendous number of books — books they likely will read only a few chapters of — students at the U. of Colorado might see a new idea take hold that would allow them to buy only one book per class. The idea for "custom textbooks" is being marketed by McGraw-Hill, the second largest college textbook publisher, and would

allow professors to choose sections from different books and have them compiled into a single bound text. Some professors are skeptical, however, claiming the new method would take longer to order the custom texts from the publisher than it would to have copy centers prepare packets of material for students. ■ Beth Potter, *Colorado Daily*, U. of Colorado

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Aid
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The outlook is encouraging. According to Moore, the default rate that was higher than 20 percent only five years ago is now down to 15.3 percent.

Moore cited an increase in the nationwide student body, more than 1 million since 1980, plus a growing number of non-traditional students who only qualify for loans, as additional reasons for the growth in the student loan program.

Moore said the dramatic increase in the cost of higher education is primarily due to the rising cost of living.

At NMU, several financial aid programs are already depleted for the year, including the Perkins supplementary grant, the Michigan Educational Opportunity Grant and the general fund scholarship.

Help could be coming

Pecotte said that in 1992 the federal government is scheduled to "reauthorize" the annual amount of federal aid granted to students. The last time the amount was set was in 1986.

"I think we'll see a major shift in the amount and type of financial aid available to students," he said.

Kitty
 Continued from page 12

But going nationwide is only the start. Talkington is negotiating with distributors in Japan and Europe.

"My goal wasn't to conquer the world," she said. "It was just to make a tape for my cat."

Talkington is currently working on a sequel to "Kitty Video." She hopes to release it in the spring.