

## Is it wrong that textbooks cost more than rent?

By DOLLY SMITH

*The Northeastern News, Northeastern U.*

It's enough to break a student's heart and wallet. The new edition of the required \$49.95 book you need is sitting on the bookstore shelves, leaving you with no hope of finding a cheaper, used copy.

Publishers of college textbooks are trying to fight a spate of recent complaints that they are coming out with more frequent editions not to keep up with changing information, but to drive the highly profitable used-book market out of business.

Publishers deny that they are attempting to raise profits by preventing students from buying used books. "That's certainly not the reason," said Melanie Davis, a developmental editor with Houghton Mifflin. "We try to keep up with what's current. Instructors generally want the new information."

Davis said that while she could not put a number on how often new editions appear, "I don't see us doing more than in the past. The cycles haven't changed."

But bookstore managers don't agree. "Over the past 10 years, there's definitely been a change toward more frequent editions," said Bill McKenna, book division manager at the Boston U. bookstore.

Michael Duffy, manager of the bookstore at Florida State U., said the space between editions "used to be about every four years, then it went down. Some come out every two, two and a half years."

Duffy said some books obviously require new information — anything to do with the Middle East or Soviet politics, for instance. But he said books covering areas such as 19th century history still will change every three years. "They say you get better graphics and more color and stuff, but it doesn't really justify (the cost)."

But publishers also say that professors who author textbooks have a hand in how frequently new editions are offered. "It's up to the professor when they choose (to offer new editions)," said Beth Mullen of Prentice Hall.

Paul Newbold, an economics professor at the U. of Illinois, said a new edition of his economic statistics textbook comes out about every four years and is partially revised to reflect current economic events. Newbold said he also changes exercises because students build up "solution banks."

But students say unnecessary changes irritate them. "A new edition came out when I was on my second Spanish course," said Nancy Carlton, a senior at the U. of Colorado. "Not only could I not sell the book back, I had to buy another one, plus a workbook."

When a publisher comes out with a lot of new editions, its cost of producing and marketing the books rises and the price of all textbooks go up. And these high costs leave students broke and frustrated.

Dean Thompson, president of Association of Students at the U. of Washington in Seattle, said he spends about \$140 for three classes, but said other students spend far more. "When I look at my books and I look at my \$140 price tag, it doesn't add up. I have maybe five or six thin books."

### DOLLARS AND SENSE BRIEFLY

**Getting stingy with student loans...** If you've had trouble paying your phone or credit card bills in the past, you may soon find it harder to get a student loan from the federal government. A provision in the recession-spurred Emergency Unemployment Act, which will go into effect Oct. 1, will require loan recipients age 21 and older to pass a credit check before receiving their money. According to Roger Murphy, spokesman for the U.S.

Department of Education, the bill was passed because extra funds were needed to pay the extended benefits. Murphy also said the government is facing \$3.6 billion in student loan defaults. "The problem is that some students will not provide repayment," he said. "It's all a matter of economics." Selena Dong, legislative coordinator of the United States Student Association, a Washington, D.C.-based student lobbying group, said the

unemployment legislation will be beneficial but, "It's wrong to attempt to pay for this on the backs of students." She added that a provision in the Higher Education Act Reauthorization Bill, currently under debate in Congress, may repeal the regulation before it takes effect. "The saddest thing is that students are being cut off through no fault of their own," Dong said. ■ Mike Demenchuk, *The Daily Targum*, Rutgers U.



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