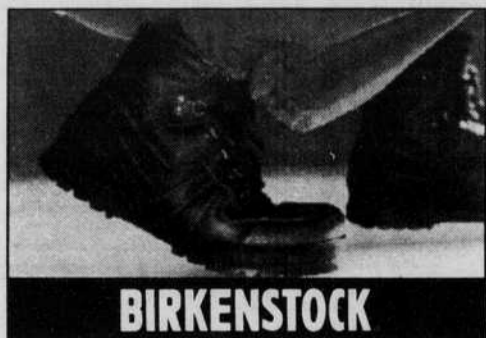


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## Textbooks

continued from page 17A

campus marketing for Thomson Learning, a publishing company. Because publishers sell fewer new textbooks, they need to raise prices on the books they do sell, which in turn leads students to buy even more used books.

"We now as publishers have to earn back our investment in a much shorter time," he said. Hochheiser said that publishers get the greatest return on a book within the first few years of its release.

Hochheiser also noted a number of other factors that contribute to the price of new books ranging from artwork and graphics, to marketing costs to teaching aids, such as videos and Web sites.

Printing new editions is one way publishing companies keep a book fresh, and stay competitive. Hochheiser said that in addition to wanting the newest information in a textbook, "professors look at a copy-right year on a book."

Evon Smith of Smith Family Bookstore sees a different motivation in the frequent updates. She said publishers put new editions out

one after another as "their strategy to close down the used book market."

"Often times they're updating some information or adding different graphics," she said, "and that doesn't radically change the text, but it changes the edition enough that students can't use the old editions."

Accordingly, Smith Family Bookstore carries "a good selection of those kinds of books that tend not to change a lot year to year, course to course," she said. Smith Family does not sell new textbooks, but specializes in used books, which it sells at 65 percent of the new book price.

Other options for students looking to cut costs include on-line book buying, which ranges from sites where students can post classified ads to sell their textbooks, such as Bookswap.com, to large Internet sellers like Textbooks.com and Varsitybooks.com. Both companies will ship books for a \$4.95 flat rate, and claim to offer better prices than the typical university bookstore.

Tom Gerald, University Bookstore events coordinator, said many of these book "e-tailers" initially offered "discounts an individual store couldn't match" in an attempt to undercut the

competition. However, Gerald said he has heard from several customers who have returned to the Bookstore as the on-line sellers cut back their discounts to comparable levels.

"We're starting to see some of that stuff balance out," he said.

Looking at a random selection of 10 coursebooks, comparing prices between Textbooks.com, Varsitybooks.com and the University Bookstore, seems to confirm this. Pricing new books over a range of disciplines, the University Bookstore, with its 10 percent discount, was as cheap or cheaper than the on-line competitors in nine out of 10 books, even before shipping costs were factored in.

The best advice, of course, is to shop around and compare prices when possible.

As for the University Bookstore, Murray said it is planning to play a video continuously during the first week of classes to educate students about where the money goes. She also said Bookstore staff are "very willing to explain the process" to students who may want more information.

"All of us here went to college — most of us went to this University," she said. "We all are totally sympathetic to their plight."

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