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Erik Bishoff Photographer

(Right to left) OSPIRG member Sonja Tilton assists OSPIRG Affordable Textbooks Campaign Coordinator Arista Hickman as she presents information from the group's report while University Bookstore General Manager Jim Williams listens to the findings.

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OSPIRG

continued from page 1

release, University students spent an average of \$269 on textbooks for fall term 2003. According to the survey, students at the University of California spend an average of \$898 per year.

"Students pay so much more for textbooks than they have in the past," Hickman said.

University Bookstore General Manager Jim Williams said he has never seen students more concerned about textbook prices in his 31 years at the bookstore.

"Textbooks do not need to be as expensive as they are," he said. "It's more important than ever that we all work together."

The overall survey found that textbook publishers add "bells and whistles" to texts intended to drive up prices, which 65 percent of surveyed faculty "rarely" or "never" use.

These added amenities generally include CD-ROMs and workbooks that are shrink-wrapped with the textbook. Half of all textbooks now come with these additions, and students rarely have the choice to buy these books without them, according to the survey.

Thomson Learning is one of the publishers the survey examined be-

cause it publishes widely used introductory calculus books.

Thomson Learning Public Relations Director Adam Gaber said the add-ons respond to expressed faculty and student needs.

"Both students and professors demand more and more access to technology to improve teaching and learning," Gaber said in an e-mail interview. "While these additional resources greatly enhance the value of textbooks, they also drive up the costs of developing, maintaining and supporting the modern textbook."

According to the survey, new editions, which make cheaper older editions obsolete, are also hitting bookstores more frequently and often include few changes. Seventy-six percent of faculty surveyed said that they felt the new editions are "never" or "half the time" justified.

According to an OSPIRG press release, few changes were found in Thomson Learning's 1999 edition of "Calculus: Early Transcendentals," compared to its 2003 edition, which sells for about \$130. A used edition can be found for \$20 to \$90.

University Physics Professor Greg Bothun said he doesn't make students buy the \$100 textbooks for his environmental studies class because the information can be accessed online for free.

"The students don't need the textbook," he said.

Gaber said the average textbook revision cycle is currently three years compared to about five years a decade ago, which he said is in part due to

advancing technology.

"To ensure students receive the greatest value possible, new editions are produced to keep pace with new information in various disciplines," he said.

The study suggests a number of policy changes for the textbook industry that many of those surveyed agreed would help.

Hickman said some suggestions include selling additional materials separately from the textbook itself, keeping textbook editions on bookstore shelves longer and providing faculty with cost information to better evaluate how textbooks will financially affect students.

According to the survey, 87 percent of faculty surveyed supported putting new information into supplements instead of publishing a new textbook edition, while 13 percent opposed the idea because of logistical problems with switching between two texts.

Hickman said the next step in the campaign is to further promote book swapping online. OSPIRG also plans to send a letter to Thomson Learning with suggestions on how to better serve students.

She said the company is one of the more prominent producers of textbooks in the country, and if it makes changes it could affect others in the industry.

"If they change their ways, then the rest of the textbook companies will follow," Hickman said.

Contact the higher education/student life/student affairs reporter at chelseaduncan@dailyemerald.com.

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Friday
Humanities Center Work-in-Progress Series entitled "Two Concepts of Freedom in Translation," featuring visiting English professor Jin Di, Room 159, Prince Lucien Campbell Hall, noon-1 p.m.
Critical Theory and Transnational Studies Lecture featuring a discussion by Eric Leed entitled "Historical Realism," 375 McKenzie Hall, 4 p.m.
South Asian Culture Night, EMU Skylight, 5:30 p.m.
International Resource Center Winter Film Festival featuring "Mostly Martha," EMU International Lounge, 7-9 p.m.

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