

## Publishers making cash

# Why books aren't cheap

by Elizabeth Leland  
Staff Writer

Student Stores may have a virtual monopoly on textbook sales in Chapel Hill, but that isn't why the cost of books is so high. Publishers are the "cruel monopolists" responsible for such high prices, said Thomas Shetley, manager of Student Stores, and Wallace Kuralt, owner of the Intimate Bookshop.

Shetley also added that some faculty are often responsible for increased costs.

Both men agreed that there's little profit in the textbook business for sellers. The retail price is established by the publisher.

Kuralt explained that textbooks are

short discount books. A bookstore makes a profit of \$1.75 on a \$10 book. The difference goes to the publisher. On trade books (non-textbooks) the store makes \$3 on a \$10 sale.

That's if the store is lucky. Many times a professor changes the textbooks for a course or cancels a course without notifying the book store. The store can only return 20% of the unbought books to the publisher. It must also pay the postage on returning the books.

Because of such expenses, Shetley said "no college store really depends on textbooks for its bread and butter." Pennants, stuffed puppy dogs and T-shirts make the running of Student Stores possible, he said.

The low profit from textbooks was the reason Kuralt closed down the Intimate's textbook department. He explained that space needed for kids' books as well as a good deal of money was tied up by textbooks which the store only sold two or three times a year.

Kuralt was also dissatisfied with the publishers' policies. Referring to the low percentage of unbought books which could be returned, he said, "If that's the kind of cooperation we get from the publishers, then to hell with them."

Both Shetley and Kuralt discouraged any fear that Student Stores will take advantage of its monopoly on book sales.

"We follow the publishers' list prices," Shetley said. "If we raise a price we'd get ashes on our heads. There's bound to be at least one student out of 20,000 who would find out."

He added that to cut prices would be unthinkable. But Shetley did have two suggestions for keeping book costs down.

First, he cited the need for some sort of governing mechanism on professors so that they could not change textbooks each year without a valid reason.

Textbook changes waste money because if a text is not going to be used the next year Student Stores buys the used book back to sell to a wholesaler. Therefore, it can only give the student 10-15 cents back on the dollar. Shetley said that if a book is going to be used again, the student can get 50 cents back on the dollar.

A second means of keeping prices down, Shetley said, is to make sure faculty meet the deadlines for book orders, which they frequently don't. To protect itself, Student Stores buys back used books at the 10-15% rate, only to find out later that the same books will be used the next semester.

"If we had found out sooner that the professor wanted the old books, students would have saved many hundreds of dollars," said Shetley.

Meanwhile students have few alternatives but to pay the inflated prices of new books at Student Stores.

The Intimate Bookshop sells some textbooks as favor to certain faculty. But the prices are comparable to those at Student Stores.

Students cargo to Five Points Book Exchange in Durham, but chances are slim that they'll find what they're looking for, unless they're in the market for law or medical books.

The APO book sale offers good discounts on used books, but not enough for 20,000 students. There's also the problem of courses which continually require different books each year.

Unless, as Shetley suggested, the faculty is made to mend its ways, UNC's student body will be well-read, but impoverished.



Pictured are some of the cast members in the Carolina Playmaker's production of 'Dark of the Moon,' which runs through Saturday at the Forest Theatre on the UNC campus. See Friday's DTH for a review.

## Rollerball: future schlock

by Michael McFee  
Film Critic

Take the worst of roller derby, pinball, football, hockey and motorcycle demolition derby, and you've got "rollerball," the game of the future. Take the worst of *Billy Jack* and *'Wide World of Sports,'* put it on skates, add as theme song Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in D-Minor*, and you've got *Rollerball*, Norman Jewison's latest spectacle in inanity.

The man who brought you *Topol* and *'Jesus Christ, Superstar'* pretends in this film (with all the profundity of Howard Cosell), that we are in the near future, free from poverty, pollution and all other material discomforts, including war. This is crucial, for instead of carnage between nations, all the world vents its violent, nasty feelings as spectators at the rollerball rink.

Rollerball is an odd melange: two teams of motorcyclists and skaters career around a rink and try to score goals with a steel ball. Their uniforms resemble the 49ers with IBM numbers, the playing area is like the Cow Palace at

11:30 on Saturday nights and the outcome approximates General Hospital's emergency room after a chain collision.

This is the story: Mr. E. has been suddenly and mysteriously commanded to retire from the sport by Britisher Bartholomew (John Houseman), who not only owns the Houston team but who also controls corporations that control the world. In refusing, Jonathan E. does the unthinkable—pitting himself against the whole world in a fight to the death and providing the unfortunately silly Man vs. Society motivation for the film.

Not surprisingly, it is the film, and not Jonathan E., that dies. The acting alone is enough to keep "Rollerball" in the penalty box. James Caan behaves as if his facial muscles suffer from terminal charley-horse. His characterization of the rebel athlete approaches the stature and sensitivity of a locker-room Tom Laughlin, besides which he is sheer poetry in the rink. John Houseman is similarly engaging as bad-guy Bartholomew, offering a stolid, sagging face and a ponderous British accent as characterization.

A truly embarrassing spot in the movie belongs to Ralph Richardson, who appears for one sad scene as the keeper of the world computer "Zero." If Zero looks and behaves like the Wizard of

Oz, then Richardson is the brainless lion, distraught with an electronic brain which can lose entire centuries and yet control the world.

But the blame for this shallowness does not lie with Richardson or even the laconic Caan, but with a director who gives more complexity to his machines and games than to his actors. His penchant for cliché and symbol is appalling: electric eye doors and wall size TV's mean the future, a cut between a heated conversation and a flaming tree outside means anger. The people of his future resemble robots in leisure suits.

The screenplay by William Harrison reinforces Jewison's simple-minded game plan. Lines like "Can't you do what you're told?" and "Life's an assignment" stick out like thesis statements in a soundtrack that otherwise features grunts and crunches and snatches of metallic Bach. After 10 minutes, it's like an instant replay of a bad sermon.

Don't misunderstand: Jewison tries to be profound and prophetic, and few would deny that sports and violence and boredom and other social problems deserve close scrutiny. But his vehicle is so obvious and his themes so blatantly overstated that the whole mess comes off like Curt Gowdy talking eschatology on Monday Night Football.

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