

A Compass special report

Textbook rental system: students like it but does it really answer their needs?

by Latisha Edwards

Renting text books may be a convenient option for ECSU students; however, this option may soon be obsolete at many universities.

Renting textbooks has been an option for many UNC system schools in the past, but due to the fast changing pace of academia and the need to stay informed about new information, the system has been criticized for placing too many limits on students' access to information.

"We are living in a competitive market, said Reginald Eldridge, manager of Winston-Salem State University Book Store. "When we were under the rental system students were being taught with outdated information..., and as competitive as things are, students need to stay abreast of as much current information as possible."

Winston-Salem State University is one of several institutions in the UNC-system to convert from a textbook rental to a purchase system. Changing to the new system allowed students to be exposed to more current information, said Eldridge.

"There are no long book rental lines, book shortages, and students get to class faster at the beginning of each semester," he added.

Under the rental system students waited in long lines at the beginning of each semester. "It would be 3 or 4 days before students could get all of the books they needed for class," said Eldridge. "This puts an institution behind in the learning process."

Students at ECSU say they encounter similar problems during registration—long lines, book shortages and even shorter tempers.

In light of these problems should ECSU convert to a book retail system also?

Many academic departments say yes. Proponents say in order for students to receive a quality education they must be exposed to the most recent data in their majors. The main problem addressed is the length of time the University must keep a book in circulation as a result of the rental agreement.

The agreement requires the University to use a book at least six semesters; a book that's used each semester must be used for three years, and a book used every other semester must be used six years.

"In some areas the books are changing very fast," said Dr. Ravindra Sinha, chairperson of the Department of Geosciences. "Three years is a long time for a student to use a book. Here in the Geosciences Department we have had three books for one year and they need to be changed already, because there have been advancements in the subjects."

Sinha fears that many students in the sciences may be missing out on valuable exposure to material they need to be competitive in their majors.

"We have talked about book purchasing, and our general feelings in the department are to look into students buying their books," Sinha said. "We are discussing steps we need to take by the end of the semester."

Dr. James Hedgbeth, chairperson of the Education Department also prefers the purchase system.

"The book rental system presents a problem in psychology where we deal with a lot of research and dated material," said Hedgbeth. "The big draw-

back with the rental system is that if you use a book one semester a year, you must keep it six years. Buying books would enhance the quality of education."

ECSU adopted the book rental system in 1973, according to Pedro Holley, manager of ECSU's bookstore.

"The business and finance committee in conjunction with academic affairs made the decision to start the book rental system to save students money," he said. "This was done because of climbing textbook prices. The rental fee was \$25 at that time."

The current book rental fee is \$100, and the Board of Trustees is considering raising that amount to \$110.

According to Holley ECSU students save about \$150 per semester by renting books, thereby accruing a four-year savings of \$1,200.

"There are books in the Geosciences Department and the Technology Department that cost as much as \$85.00 apiece," said Holley. "For example, *Technical Drawing* costs \$68.45."

"The books for an incoming freshman with six GE classes and a lab would cost \$254.93 through the purchase system. It's to the advantage of the University, and the students to rent."

Many ECSU students say they like the book rental system.

There are students at ECSU who share Holley's sentiments and generally like the rental system. Senior English major Lolithia Underdue says she likes the rental system, but she would like the purchasing process to be simplified.

"I like the fact that we can rent our books, because I've had some GE books

that I would not want to keep; however, I still have the option to buy the books I want to keep. The rental system needs to be revised because if the total cost of your books is less than the book rental fee, it's hard to get the difference owed to you refunded."

According to Eldridge, students should consider the long-term advantages of a book purchase system. Textbook ownership will provide students with ongoing information necessary for their careers.

"As a student you should want to invest in your education," said Eldridge. "We are competing with students from other universities and we cannot afford to be behind."

At North Carolina A & T University, which converted to the book purchase system in 1991, textbook coordinator Lovie McBryde says students felt purchasing books would better prepare them for their professions. The system allowed them to build a reference library.

"Students are satisfied with the new system and if the books are in good condition the bookstore will buy the book back from the student for one half of the purchase price," said McBryde. "This gives the professor the option to change a book every semester if they choose to do so."

Professors at ECSU say they are concerned about the effectiveness of the rental system.

"We have been discussing the pros and cons of book purchasing," said Sinha. "One weakness is it will be more expensive, but if the students' purpose at the university is to study, buying books will be more advantageous in the long run."

POETRY

Tonight Is That Night

There is so much energy in the air.

There is so much power in my hands.

My shoulder doesn't hurt any more.

I wish I had a woman to share a night like this with.

I wish we could make hot, wet, nasty, stinky, passionate, freaky, wild, violent, ghetto love to each

other.

No, not love, I want just plain and simple lustful trailer park sex in a well lit room in the deepest pit of hell.

This is some freaky stuff. I have to go and get out of here.

I won't put on my boots because I am scared that

something strange might happen.

I can feel it coming in the air of the night.

Nobody knows me.

I don't think that I even really know myself.

I am lost in a cosmic, catholic, metaphysical storm and I don't know what to do. I am spinning around the world in a daze

and ooh it feels so good.

Tonight is the night that, like God, I will bid my will on Earth and the Heavens above and play in Hell below.

Tonight is the night that I will let it all hang out.

But only for one night.

Tonight is that night!

Andrae L. Brown I