

And Then There Was One



How Book Buying Changes at a UNC Without Tar Heel Textbooks

BY ELLEN FLASPOEHLER
ASSISTANT FEATURES EDITOR

When Pop's Tar Heel Textbooks closed its doors March 22, it meant more to the University than just another local business failing.

It left UNC Student Stores as the only major source for sales and buybacks of textbooks in Chapel Hill.

This has many students wondering what will happen to book prices and the already long lines at the on-campus bookstore.

Tar Heel Textbooks, which opened in 1988, had served students who were shopping for the best deal in books, said Joe Turk, the store's former manager.

Turk said the business at 301 W. Franklin St. had been doing fairly well but might have done better had they been able to expand it.

"We wanted to stay within walking distance of the campus and had been looking for more retail space for five years, and that just didn't appear likely on Franklin Street," he said. "The owners felt it was not worth the investment to run the business in such a small space. We couldn't even carry books for all departments."

Arkansas Book Services, which owned Tar Heel Textbooks, and store managers had been talking about closing the store for a long time, Turk said. "We had no conscious plan," he said. "We kept looking for space and it never materialized, so we eventually had to make a decision, and that is why we closed when we did."

The store's closing caught some Student Stores officials by surprise.

"I don't know why they closed," said John Jones, director of Student Stores. "I talked to one of their people who said they felt they didn't have enough space. The closing seemed surprising because I don't think they were having money problems."

The Waiting Game

The obvious effect of Tar Heel Textbooks' closing is that there is now only one major place to buy and sell books, Turk said.

Student Stores already had between 80 and 90 percent of the textbook market before Tar Heel Textbooks closed. Some are concerned that the closing will increase the length of the already long waits at Student Stores.

"The lines at Student Stores are tremendously long, and I think they will be made worse now that Tar Heel Textbooks is gone," said Kari Whisnant, a sophomore from Claremont who was a Tar Heel Textbooks customer.

Ashley O'Brien, a junior from Raleigh, agreed: "It was ridiculous at Student Stores with the lines. I used to go to Tar Heel Textbooks to sell my books because of the lines."

In the past, Jones said Student Stores has had between 24 and 26 registers running during the book-buying rush; he said four more would be added in the fall.

"They had about four registers at Tar Heel Textbooks, so that should provide a balance at Student Stores," he said. Other improvements being made to speed up lines include an

upgraded computer system for running the cash registers, faster credit card approval and additional employees helping to bag books so that cashiers don't have to do it.

Gina Mahalek, course materials manager for Students Stores, said students would be pleased with how fast the lines move and that the building would be able to accommodate student needs.

"We are improving the system and making internal changes that are invisible to the customer but will be beneficial to the customer and will help streamline the process," she said.

"Students should remember that peak buying times are after class and after the first day of classes," she added. "They can purchase books at any register in the store. The store will have extended hours, so evening and closing hours are the best time to shop."

Money Matters

But longer lines aren't the only student concern; many are worried about the potential for higher prices now that Student Stores doesn't have any significant competition.

"There will be serious repercussions from the closing of Tar Heel Textbooks," said Andrew Kendall, a sophomore from Goldsboro and a Student Stores customer. "This has taken away (Student Stores') biggest competitor and forms a monopoly."

"Books are expensive enough as it is, and Student Stores doesn't need the opportunity to raise prices," he added. "There is a good chance they will."

But both Jones and Mahalek stressed that book prices would not increase, and that the price of books was never based on other stores' prices.

"We use the publisher's list price provided by the book industry to set our own prices, and Tar Heel Textbooks did the same," Jones said. "We are not here to make money but to serve students. As a business, we do have to make some money to keep ourselves going, but the rest goes back into student scholarships."

He did say that prices would be affected by how fast Student Stores learned what books faculty would need for the semester, so that it could search used book sources earlier.

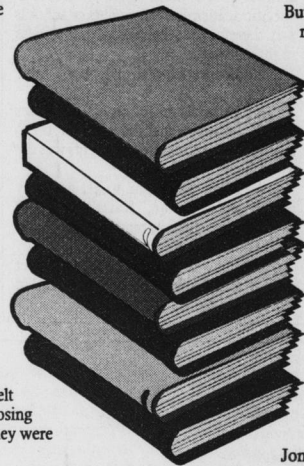
"We have a budget to buy back lots of books this year," Mahalek said. "Faculty submission of their order forms will affect the prices. We need to know faculty orders before final exams so we can enter the information into our database to know what books we are looking for."

Buyback prices are set nationally, she said, adding that students get 50 percent of the book's new price, whether it is a new or used book, if the store knows it will be used in the coming year.

Jones said that if the store didn't know whether a book would be re-used, then it could only pay the national wholesaler rate of \$5 to \$10 per book.

To improve the buyback period, Mahalek said the store planned to build awareness of additional buyback locations. She said

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Former Tar Heel Textbooks manager Joe Turk said the store closed on March 22 because of cramped space, not because of bad business. The shop, which opened in 1988, was Student Stores' only major competition.

Boone Book Renters Pay \$48 a Semester

BY SALLIE LACY
STAFF WRITER

Spending \$48 per semester on textbooks might sound like a dream or maybe even a joke.

But that is all students at Appalachian State University in Boone pay.

ASU, which is part of the 16-campus UNC system, uses a rental system for textbooks. The \$802 that students pay for tuition each semester includes the \$48 needed to rent any number of books from the student bookstore.

The 11,866 students find that hunting for the less-expensive used book, going to three bookstores to find the best deal, checking out books from the library or sharing books with a friend is a waste of time. The cost is still \$48.

Another perk of the rental system is that there is virtually no threat of having books stolen to get money back from the bookstore. The bookstore does not buy back rented books because it already owns them.

If a student loses a book, he or she can't turn in someone else's book as their own because the last four digits of the students' social security numbers are stamped in each of their books.

If the books are turned in late, or they are damaged — that does not include highlighting — then students must buy them, said Don George, ASU textbook manager.

Or if they want to hold on to the books, the students can buy them at 25 percent off the original price.

The rental system would never work at UNC because it requires total faculty cooperation to be effective, George said.

Gina Mahalek, course materials manager at Student Stores, is also skeptical of the rental system. With a such a system, faculty teaching the same course would have to agree on the same book, she said.

"From the academic freedom point of view, all faculty like to have the freedom to teach what they want," Mahalek said. "A rental system would set the curriculum for three or four years, and it might not be a vital curriculum."

A 1980 study was done by the Student-Faculty Store Committee to explore the possibility of changing the Student Stores sales practices to a rental system. The study concluded that Student Stores would be willing and able to run a rental system, if asked.

The report added: "It is our feeling that the more we participate in the nationwide used book market, the more successful we will be."

But the report also said the net profit from a rental system might be less than from book sales, resulting in a drop in the amount

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Colleges Look for Top Text System

BY SARA FRISCH
STAFF WRITER

Imagine buying a stack of textbooks in the fall, returning to the bookstore three months later for a partial rebate, and still having the opportunity to sell your books back at the end of the semester.

Students at the University of Kansas can do just that at the private, nonprofit Kansas Union Bookstore that is affiliated with the university.

A mix of university-owned stores, nonprofit organizations and private corporations sell textbooks in college communities across the nation. But the lack of competition seems to be what separates the market in Chapel Hill from other university towns.

The system at UNC is fairly simple now

that Tar Heel Textbooks, a private used bookstore, has closed. Alpha Phi Omega's student-run book exchange and several bookstores that don't specialize in textbooks share a negligible percentage of the textbook industry, but Student Stores is the only major outlet for textbooks in Chapel Hill.

That's not the case at the University of Virginia, where the university-owned bookstore competes with two private ones in Charlottesville.

John Kates, director of University Bookstore at UVA, said the school opened its outlet about 30 years ago to keep the market for textbooks more competitive. The student government also runs a book exchange, but it is not a large-scale operation, Kates said.

The market in Bloomington, home of Indiana University, is similar to that of Charlottesville. IU's university-owned bookstore is in competi-

tion with two private bookstores that sell new and used books. However, the market is further complicated by a purchasing agreement that divides the market before the students start shopping.

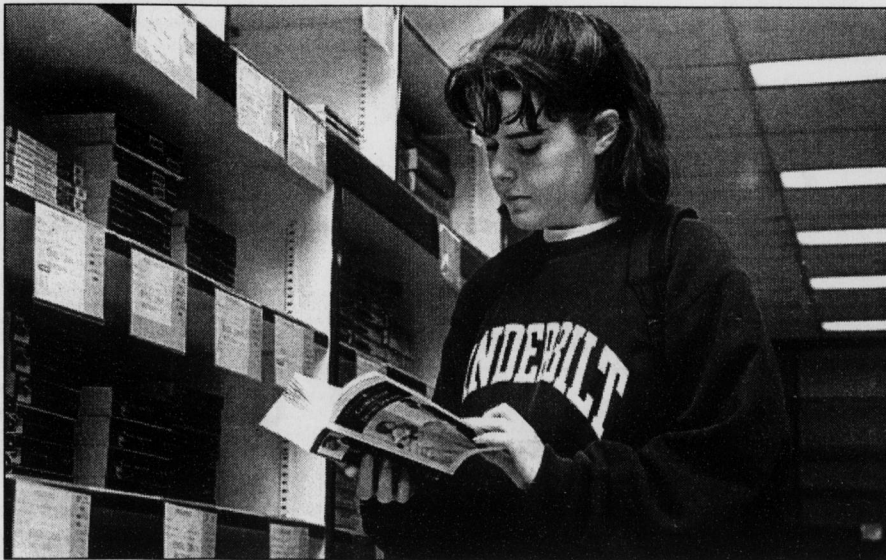
Celeste Glanzer, the textbook manager at the Indiana University Bookstore, said her bookstore received book order requests from faculty and then ordered only 40 percent of that number.

The agreement with the two private bookstores provides for one to order 40 percent and the other 20 percent. Thus, the competition between stores to attract IU students is limited prior to the buying season.

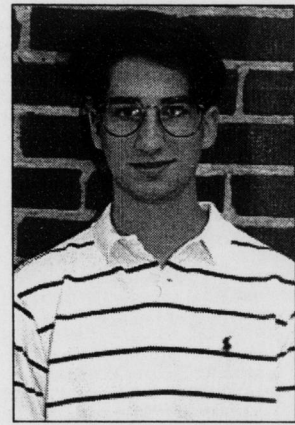
Bookstores in Gainesville, where the University of Florida is located, not only compete for textbook sales, but also for textbook orders.

"We try to have the departments send all the book orders here," said Dennis Barry, senior

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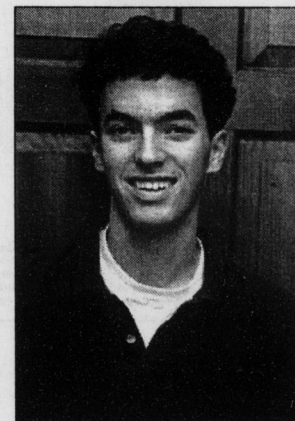


Freshman Andrea McAlister mulls over a purchase in Student Stores. The store plans to add four cash registers and more employees to counter the added business expected after the closing of Tar Heel Textbooks.



"You could get in and out of (Tar Heel Textbooks) in two minutes. It's going to be a lot more of a hassle."

HEATH PRIOR



"It won't have any effect because I buy my books from the school anyway. I'd rather give my money to the school."

MARC WOJNOWICH