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### Access And Affordability: The Textbook Conundrum

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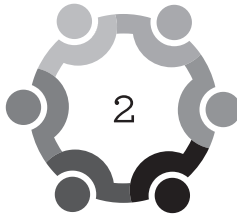
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# ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

## The Textbook Conundrum

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*Peggy Seiden and Amy McColl*

**T**his chapter is the story of how the Swarthmore College Libraries conceived of and implemented a program that, at the time, flew in the face of standard academic collection development principles, as well as many faculty members' wishes. In response to student concerns, the libraries have purchased all assigned textbooks and placed them on reserve in their libraries for the past six years. The program has evolved over time in several directions. We have integrated the program with our e-book collection strategy, and this past year we implemented a textbook exchange/clearinghouse so that students could donate the past year's textbooks for other students to use, rather than selling them back to the bookstore. We are also hosting workshops to educate students on legal alternatives to purchasing their textbooks.

Swarthmore College (Swarthmore, Pennsylvania) is home to slightly over 1,500 undergraduates and 211 faculty. It is nearly unique among liberal arts colleges in that it has a general engineering program in addition to programs

in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and sciences. It has a fairly open curriculum with minimal requirements: students take three courses in each of the major divisions (humanities, social sciences, and sciences), though advanced placement credits can go towards meeting these. There is also a requirement to take three writing-intensive courses and at least twenty courses outside of one's major. Swarthmore College has a main library, McCabe, and two branch libraries: the Cornell Library for Science and Engineering and the Daniel C. Underhill Library for the Performing Arts. The McCabe, Cornell, and Daniel C. Underhill libraries house their own reserves collections appropriate to the disciplines supported therein.

As a community, Swarthmore has become increasingly concerned with the affordability of a college education. Swarthmore's core values derive from its Quaker beginnings. In our most recent strategic planning process, community members identified these values as respect for the individual, consensus decision-making, simple living, social responsibility and justice, generous giving, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These values in turn underpin one of our key strengths: our desire to provide access and opportunity for all students, regardless of their financial circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

Swarthmore is one of a decreasing minority of institutions that continue a policy of "need blind" admissions and who meet the full demonstrated need of all admitted students. Need blind admissions refers to the college's policy to accept students only on merit, without considering their ability to pay their fees. In 2007 the college instituted a no loan policy, in which all financial aid from the college is in the form of grants or work-study. Fifty-three percent of our students are on financial aid, with the average aid award at about \$45,800 out of \$61,400 in total fees, excluding educational materials and personal expenses. Estimated expenses for books are about \$1,350.<sup>2</sup> The number of first-year students who qualify for aid continues to increase and is now just under 58 percent.<sup>3</sup>

## **OUR HISTORICAL RESERVE PROGRAM**

The focus on using reserves to provide students with access to textbooks fits well within the traditional library practices of the college. Swarthmore has always had a robust course reserves program. There are both general reserve and honors reserve in all three of its libraries. The "honors reserve" is an open collection arranged by honors seminars. The earliest mention of the "reserves

shelf” in the library dates back to 1915, though in all probability it existed long before that date.<sup>4</sup> Faculty routinely assigned significant amounts of reading beyond that in required textbooks. In addition to monographs, faculty or their administrative assistants put together binders of readings on reserve, rather than selling course packs in the bookstore. With the advent of the electronic reserves program, these binders have all but disappeared. For years, students would line up before 9 p.m. in front of the main circulation/reserves desk to check materials out overnight. Faculty in the sciences also place personal copies of texts on reserve so that students can consult them as needed without having to carry the books around with them all day.

While there is no definitive evidence to support the following, it seems that the primacy of the reserves program as a core piece of the academic program may be linked to the college’s honors program developed in 1920–21. Frank Aydelotte, then president of the college, proposed a program based upon the Oxford model in which “attendance at lectures and classes should be entirely voluntary, and . . . the honors degree should depend upon the student’s success in a series of examinations.”<sup>5</sup> Students would prepare for these tests through their *independent reading* and through instruction offered by the college; the central idea was for students to take greater responsibility for their intellectual growth rather than to “spoon-feed” them.<sup>6</sup> As the program took shape, so too did the idea that students would master a body of literature associated with a particular honors seminar or topic. The amount of reading was not prescribed, though students were expected to do background reading for each seminar meeting. A period of significant growth of the library’s collection coincided directly with the initiation of the honors program. In *An Adventure in Education*, a 1941 treatise on the honors program by an anonymous group of Swarthmore faculty, the authors write: “reading for honors brings a higher percentage of its votaries to the library’s resources and keeps man and book together for longer periods than is the case under any less exacting course of study.” The honors reserves collection was also noted to be both broader and more scholarly than that of typical undergraduate institutions.<sup>7</sup> Reading lists included “few if any college textbooks” but focused instead on original documents and classics, and only then should students “consult commentaries, criticisms, and textbook renderings.”<sup>8</sup> Charles B. Shaw, librarian of the college during the establishment and rapid growth of the honors program, introduced many modern library practices in his first decade and garnered significantly greater support for both materials and staffing.<sup>9</sup> Today the honors reserves collection is comprised of nearly 8,000 items in support of 123 seminars.

## HISTORY OF SWARTHMORE'S TEXTBOOK PURCHASING PROGRAM

Concerns about the cost of textbooks and reliance on the library's reserve shelf as a solution are not new. A 1962 article in *The Phoenix*, Swarthmore College's student newspaper, noted so, as seen in this excerpt:<sup>10</sup>

AS EVERY good student knows, the purchase of text-books has become in recent years a major financial burden. With the price of even paperbacks spiraling, students have put more pressure on the rather limited reserves of the library, while some professors have been forced to abandon the "right" books for some less worthy but cheaper texts. Yet even these undesirable, "last-ditch" solutions have proved inadequate; the average Swarthmore student finds book-purchases accounting for an increasingly higher proportion of his total school expenditures.

For many years, Access and Lending staff solicited textbook information from faculty members each semester, and professors and instructors would send annotated lists back to the library, including the call number if the library already owned the book. Orders were then placed for titles not already held in the libraries' collections. This system was not comprehensive, and it relied on faculty members' response and getting the information in time to have the books placed on reserve before the start of classes, but it was largely successful in getting the majority of required readings on the reserve shelf. In more recent years as faculty retired and new faculty members were hired, this system was not quite as effective, and we found that the bookstore was getting more comprehensive required textbook lists from the faculty. We considered ways in which the library could work with the bookstore to streamline the ordering process.

Following the economic downturn that began in 2008, Swarthmore Student Council members began discussions with administrators at the college to bring attention to the fact that some students, including students on full scholarships, were not able to afford to buy all of their required textbooks. These concerns were discussed in an article appearing in the student-edited online journal *The Daily Gazette* in October 2008. Author Allie Lee stated, "Textbook prices have long been a hot issue among college students and their parents. Even though \$200-\$500 for books per semester is not that much in comparison to tuition costs at most private colleges, buying books is yet another source of financial stress."<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the 2009-10 academic year, new Student Council members stated that not enough research had been done to find the most

efficient way to resolve the problem of high textbook costs, and a campus forum was planned for November 16, 2009, in order to bring together key players. A description of the forum that appeared in the student newspaper *The Phoenix* read as follows: “Class Awareness Month and Student Council will host a discussion about textbook buying. The event aims to bring students, faculty, staff and librarians together to help alleviate the burdening costs of textbooks and educate students about how the system works. This will give students a chance to voice their thoughts while also hearing why some options simply won’t work. One goal is to better explain why the textbook system currently works the way it does and what can be done to improve it.”<sup>12</sup>

Student turnout at the forum was very low, fewer than a dozen students, according to a *Phoenix* article published November 19, 2009, but the discussion was lively. The student financial policy representative, Dan Symonds, stated: “We wanted to make people aware that [the Student Council]’s concerned about textbooks and we wanted to solicit as many ideas as possible.”<sup>13</sup> Former bookstore director Kathy Grace pointed out that the store actually lost money on selling textbooks:

Grace explained that the college bookstore is already losing money on textbooks because it raises the textbook price by 20 percent on top of the net price instead of the 25 percent industry standard. While the bookstore is expected to make money, she says that the money is made from sweatshirts and other merchandise, not textbooks. “About three years ago we started losing money on textbooks,” Grace said. “A lot of students would buy the books or order the books online, and then return the books, so we’re paying all the merchant fees on nothing, and those add up.” Grace also points out that a major problem for the bookstore is that many faculty members do not provide information about required books for their classes until the winter or summer break, making it difficult for the bookstore to find used copies to sell the next year. “If we know the faculty will use a book the next semester, then we can put a guaranteed buyback sticker on it and the student can buy the book at 75 [percent] and sell it at 50, so they’re only spending 25 on a textbook, which is a pretty good deal,” Grace said.<sup>14</sup>

Her comment about the timeliness of getting book lists from faculty members points to another development in 2008, the passing of the Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) into law, which included a textbook provision that went into effect July 2010, which requires college bookstores to make bibliographic, pricing, purchase, and rental information available to students.<sup>15</sup>

In order for bookstores to make this information available early enough for students to have choices in terms of textbook purchase or rental, the book lists must be finalized by faculty members in a timely fashion, which is a challenge for all. Also from the same *Phoenix* article:

Biology professor Scott Gilbert said that many new textbooks are sent by publishers late in the semester, preventing the professors from choosing new books until later. Gilbert has written three textbooks himself. “The reason why textbooks are so expensive is because after the first semester, the used book market kicks in and the publisher, the artist and the writer get nothing,” Gilbert said.<sup>16</sup>

At the forum, the director of financial aid, Laura Talbot, stated that in 2008–09 the college spent \$870,000 in textbook allowances for students.<sup>17</sup> However, there is no way to ensure that the money awarded as part of the aid package for books is actually spent on textbooks. Following the forum, library staff met and decided that the fairest way to spend the grant money would be to try to purchase required textbooks which were not already owned by the libraries and place them on the reserve shelves. While not a perfect solution, the plan would allow students equitable access to free copies of their required readings.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY TEXTBOOKS?

When we proposed trying to address textbook affordability by purchasing all of the textbooks assigned by faculty, there was a certain amount of resistance among staff. The chief concern was that the project would eat into our general monographs budget and that many standard textbooks would need yearly updating. However, given that 80 percent of monographs that are purchased “just in case” are used only 20 percent of the time, it seemed that directing our funds to purchasing materials that would be in demand was more than a good investment; it was a social good. We also recognized that only a small percentage of courses—typically introductory courses in biology, chemistry, economics, psychology, and foreign languages—required students to purchase standard textbooks, although the difference between a “textbook” and other scholarly works is often blurry at best. Is a standard edition of Sophocles that is used in an introductory drama course a textbook? What about the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*? Even with a very liberal definition of “textbook,” only 5 percent of the purchases in the last two years were scholarly works.

As we reviewed the lists of required textbooks, we soon discovered that the vast majority of materials aligned with our general collection development policy and that the lists served as an excellent collection development tool. In the past, much of the general collection had been built from faculty requests, but as we moved to a slip approval program and faculty workload increased, fewer and fewer faculty took responsibility for ensuring that collections in their fields were up-to-date. Materials selection fell on the shoulders of the research and instruction librarians with little input from faculty. We were unaware that certain editions of literary, philosophical, or religious texts that were in our collection were not necessarily the ones that faculty were using with their classes. A side benefit of the project was reconnecting with the faculty and curriculum, albeit not in as direct a manner as when faculty drove much of the materials acquisition.

Students were not simply distressed about purchasing a \$200 textbook; they were concerned about the number of scholarly monographs and editions of texts required for literature, classics, history, philosophy, and religion courses which could easily add up to more than \$200 per course. As a point of reference, in one semester surveyed, the average cost for students to buy required texts for a single course over all disciplines was \$151. The most expensive course for that semester, a political science class, had a total textbook price tag of \$466. Furthermore, faculty rarely asked students to read critical and scholarly works in their entirety. It was more likely that they would assign several chapters over the course of a semester. A reserve collection would allow students to make personal photocopies of chapters in the same way they once did for journal articles.

## **INITIATION OF THE TEXTBOOK PURCHASING PROGRAM IN THE LIBRARIES**

At the end of the 2008–09 academic year, the Swarthmore College Student Council found that it had a surplus of rollover funds, and members suggested that the organization could spend a portion of that money to alleviate the financial burdens of students who could not afford to buy all of their books. A decision was made to donate \$10,000 of the rollover money to the library, but no consensus was reached on how best to spend the funds. Some ideas included purchasing textbooks for the library reserve collection, starting a textbook rental program, creating a textbook donation program on campus, buying a print-on-demand station, and purchasing e-textbook licenses which could serve a greater number of students. In the end, it was decided that using



the funds to buy required textbooks for the library collection would have the most immediate positive impact.

Starting in the spring semester of 2010, the libraries began to spend the \$10,000 received from the Student Council on texts designated as required readings by faculty members. Initially, the textbook coordinator for the bookstore sent a list of courses along with required text information, including ISBN and abbreviated titles, to Acquisitions staff, who then searched the catalog to see if the library already owned the title. If so, the call number information was added to the title information and sent to an Access and Lending Staff member, who placed the book on reserve. If the title or edition was not owned by the library, Acquisitions staff placed an order for the book, and when received, the title was placed directly on reserve for that class. Over time, the bookstore changed its presentation of required textbook information to comply with HEOA, offering lists of courses along with required textbooks and the various options for acquiring the readings, including links to rental sites, used copies from various sites, and new copies from either the bookstore or from Amazon.com. The library staff used the revised website to print out lists of textbooks for each course, and annotated the lists for Access and Lending staff with relevant information. The process continues to evolve, and bookstore and library staff now use a single shared spreadsheet in order to disseminate textbook information as quickly as possible.

Surprisingly, the \$10,000 allocated for textbook purchases in spring 2010 lasted into the 2012 spring semester. Due to the previous practice of collecting solicited textbook lists from faculty members, the library already owned a good percentage of the textbooks on the lists, and that minimized the expenses. When the Student Council funds ran out, the college librarian, Peggy Seiden, agreed to continue the program using library budget dollars from our monographs budget line, and we have continued to purchase required texts as needed. Of course, the program is not perfect: the bookstore lists are generated by information sent by faculty members, and if no information is received for a particular course, the library cannot purchase the books. Some faculty members never send their lists to the bookstore, preferring instead to provide course materials that they have authored and/or compiled directly to students via Moodle, the course management system, or their own websites. Some faculty members continue the practice of sending annotated lists directly to the Access and Lending Department. Additionally, unless the bookstore receives explicit information from the professor about which edition, translator, ISBN, or publisher will be used, the edition which is readily available in bulk will be chosen and ordered

for sale in the store. Despite these challenges, over the past six years we have built an extensive collection of textbooks and required readings that is available free of charge to our students through our reserves program. An additional bonus is that this practice has allowed us to update our teaching collection to reflect the latest editions and newest translations of core textbooks, which might not otherwise have been added to the collection.

## **E-BOOK COLLECTIONS AND TEXTBOOK RESERVES**

In 2011 the TriColleges (Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr, and Haverford Libraries) began a demand-driven acquisition (DDA) program with EBL, which is now a part of ProQuest e-books, and e-books became a more significant piece of our overall collection strategy. We are also subscribers to ebrary's Academic Complete collection of e-book titles, the eDuke Books Scholarly Collection, and the ACLS Humanities E-Book package. In 2015 we participated in a JSTOR Books DDA program via our state consortium, the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI), which will continue this year with some changes (backlist titles will be via PALCI in an EBA program; front list titles will be available via DDA through a TriColleges deal). In 2016 we joined the Project MUSE UPCC evidence-based program via Lyrisis, so access to e-book packages has continued to grow.

In order to provide more access to required textbooks, we link the e-book records in our OPAC to our course reserves system (see figure 2.1), giving students another way to access course content.

We continue to buy print copies of all required textbooks, so the e-books linked from these packages offer supplemental access. The downside of most of these e-book interfaces (with the exception of JSTOR and MUSE) is the digital rights management (DRM) limitation placed on printing and downloading by individual publishers, which can be frustrating for our patrons. As a result of DRM restrictions, along with evidence that our students still prefer to read monographs in print, we always buy a copy of the print book for the reserve shelf, even if the e-book version is available in our catalog.

As different models become available, we have on occasion bought single-title licenses for e-book content, but library licenses are difficult to come by and terms can be unnecessarily complex in the textbook publishing arena. Most of the single e-book titles we have bought for reserves have been large

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American archives : gender, race, and class in visual culture / Shawn Michelle Smith	Smith, Shawn Michelle, 1965-	Swarthmore: McCabe Honors 4 weeks -- ENGL 114 Swarthmore -- AVAILABLE	
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American literature and the culture of reprinting, 1834-1853 [electronic resource] / Meredith L. McGil	McGill, Meredith L	Swarthmore: Web Access -- Z479 .M34 2007eb -- ONLINE	
The business of letters : authorial economies in antebellum America / Leon Jackson	Jackson, Leon, 1965-	Swarthmore: McCabe Honors 4 weeks -- ENGL 114 Swarthmore -- AVAILABLE	
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City reading : written words and public spaces in antebellum New York / David M. Henkin	Henkin, David M	Swarthmore: McCabe Honors 4 weeks -- ENGL 114 Swarthmore c.2 -- AVAILABLE	
The common pot : the recovery of native space in the Northeast / Lisa Brooks	Brooks, Lisa Tanya	Swarthmore: McCabe Honors 4 weeks -- ENGL 114 Swarthmore -- AVAILABLE	

Figure 2.1 | Screenshot of Course Reserve System Linking to E-Book Versions of Textbooks

reference works, as well as some scholarly monographs purchased via EBL or ebrary on a bibliographer's or faculty member's recommendation. However, with data from a 2014 survey of our students' habits with regard to textbooks revealing that 40.7 percent would prefer to use print textbooks and only 4.1 percent would prefer to use e-books, we are likely to continue to prefer print and only purchase e-book content when specifically requested.<sup>18</sup>

## STUDENT STRATEGIES FOR GETTING TEXTBOOKS

The college last participated in the National Association of College Stores Student Watch survey during fall 2014. The association administers the survey each semester to determine student purchasing patterns for course materials. The Swarthmore College bookstore issued an open invitation to participate in

the survey to all students and slightly over 11 percent (172 students) answered the survey. Thirty-six percent of the respondents were first-year students; 18 percent were sophomores; 24 percent were juniors; and 21 percent were seniors. While the low return rate does not permit a high level of confidence in the findings, it does provide some sense of student textbook access patterns, and where national data was available, the findings align with those data. While 88 percent of first-year students purchased their course materials, only 77 percent of seniors purchased any of their books. The number of students who borrowed materials increased from 14.5 percent (first-years) to 37 percent (seniors). The number of students who said they acquired textbooks through Internet download/piracy rose from 13 percent (first-years) to 26 percent (seniors). When asked what their main reason was for not acquiring course materials, 54 percent answered that they could get the materials elsewhere without purchase, though another 46 percent answered that they didn't want or need them.<sup>19</sup>

As part of the research for this chapter, we also interviewed ten undergraduates who represented all class years and majors in all three divisions as well as two recent alumna. While not all of their behaviors aligned with the findings of the survey, these conversations did help to flesh out the general data. Even among confessed bibliophiles—students who routinely spend hours in used bookstores and spend discretionary funds on building their own book collections—few of the students interviewed about their textbook acquisition habits purchase all the required materials for their courses. While some students prefer to purchase materials for their major areas of study and find other means of getting materials for courses that fulfill divisional requirements, others purchase only those materials that have personal meaning or value, such as poetry or fiction, and find other ways of procuring their remaining textbooks. Some use reserves, while others search for e-books in the catalog, JSTOR, or Google.com. These students are creative, innovative and collaborative, sharing their strategies for procuring texts or the actual textbooks.

A student will employ a variety of strategies depending on how she values the content and whether it will be useful to her in the future. The student might purchase a used textbook even if it is an older version, particularly if it will be used in more than one course; she might rent another textbook through Amazon.com; if the course requires a series of paperbacks, she might look for used copies or rent them through the bookstore or look for assigned materials online in the learning management system or through the library. Several students who study languages indicated that they would purchase dictionaries, because they will use them over their entire academic careers. Furthermore,

the textbook habits of students evolve over the course of their four years. Frequently, first-year students will purchase most if not all of their textbooks, but by their junior year, they have developed other means of securing access to the textbook content.

While students use the textbooks in the reserve collection, they often want or need to keep the materials for longer periods of time than the allotted two hours. If they only require a chapter or two, they may scan the necessary pages, though others may take notes. Another strategy is to try and secure the materials through interlibrary loan or borrow the books from within our consortium from Bryn Mawr or Haverford. The PALCI EZBorrow system (a disintermediated system used by over fifty libraries in Pennsylvania and surrounding states) allows for semester-long borrowing and materials cannot be recalled.

The majority of students prefer to have their own copies of materials, and though some are content with digital copies, many still prefer print that they can mark up. Preference for print remains strong according to a recent national survey from the National Association of College Stores, which confirms findings from a reading preferences survey that Swarthmore conducted during spring 2015.<sup>20</sup>

Sixty-nine percent of the students responding to the fall 2014 NACS survey purchased materials from the college store, while 62 percent said they purchased materials from Amazon. In the interviews, students said they use Amazon.com to seek out used copies if those are significantly less expensive. However, 80 percent of our local NACS survey respondents noted that all things being equal, they would prefer to purchase or rent their materials from the college bookstore.<sup>21</sup>

Several students confessed to strategies that are distinctly unethical, if not illegal. These strategies included

- Purchasing international editions of textbooks which are usually significantly cheaper than the U.S. editions
- Using online discussion forums, such as Internet Relay Chat clients, as a means of finding exact editions of textbooks that have been scanned and are available as PDFs by students all over the world
- Purchasing textbooks, scanning them, and sharing the PDFs with classmates over the local file-sharing system, and returning the textbook for a refund

For students who grew up post-Napster, the perception is that file sharing raises few, if any ethical issues.

## **THE FACULTY PERSPECTIVE**

Faculty are by now well aware of the additional financial burden of textbooks and do not always demand that students have the most recent edition of a textbook. However, many faculty still feel that for students to fully grasp the course material they need to purchase the textbooks. As one faculty member wrote:

Having a book means (whether realistically or not) “ownership” of the course or the material. Like other things, I think that if a person makes an investment (literally) into a course by actually paying money to get the book, they will feel the responsibility of allocating more time for the course.<sup>22</sup>

This belief is held by many faculty, but seems particularly true for faculty in the foreign languages and economics. It’s unclear whether faculty are fully aware of the extent to which students have developed other strategies for accessing the content.

Scott Gilbert, an emeritus faculty member, who has authored the seminal textbook in developmental biology, noted that introductory texts do not necessarily need to be revised as often as advanced texts which need to convey the state of the art. He revises his own textbook every three years and estimates that one-third of the content is new. Just as it is likely that faculty are not fully aware of how students acquire course materials, he writes that he thinks most students are unaware of what goes into the writing and production of textbooks.<sup>23</sup>

A few faculty have tried to address the high cost of textbooks by putting together their own course text and making it freely available to their students. We know of only one case where a department tried to use an open textbook, in this case for the first-year biology course. This “experiment” was deemed to be a failure, noting that the introductory biology text from OpenStax was incomplete and sections were missing or poorly written.

In some disciplines, faculty make most of the course readings available via the Moodle learning management system. In essence, these readings are similar to course packs, but where possible, the Moodle system directly links to the publisher’s PDF.

## **ASSESSING THE SUCCESS OF THE TEXTBOOK PURCHASING PROGRAM**

The students who were interviewed were asked specifically about their use of reserves to access textbooks. While students were aware that the libraries had all course textbooks on reserve, and they all were selective when it came to purchasing textbooks, their use of these materials was highly individualistic. Those that used reserves, used them heavily and the others didn't use them at all. One student remarked that the quality of the scanner in the science library precluded her use. Others complained about a loan period of only two hours.

We have begun to do in-depth analysis of the use of the reserve textbook program. This fall we analyzed 200 courses (approximately half of the courses offered that semester in order to get a minimal error rate of 5 percent). Of these, 125 courses had at least one required textbook. (Note: We placed any and all required textbooks on reserve.) For each course we looked at the number and cost of all required texts, the number of unique items and total copies on reserve, enrollment, and circulation of the two most expensive books. We have not yet completed a full statistical analysis, but we have observed certain patterns in the data.

Circulation patterns are distinctly different for the sciences and the humanities/social sciences. On average, the science courses have two required textbooks on reserve, while courses in the humanities or social sciences average just under seven. Each textbook in the sciences circulated an average of 27.6 times over the semester; in the humanities/social sciences that number was only 2.8 times. Many of the required items in the humanities and social sciences never circulated.

In order to try and identify why some items circulate and others do not, we are also analyzing pricing data. We are examining whether the most expensive required books also have the highest circulation rates, but thus far we do not see any patterns emerging. It is likely that for courses in the humanities and social sciences, some other factors drive circulation. One other pattern of note: where a discipline has a defined series of graduated courses (mostly in the sciences), circulation rates for upper-level courses are higher than for lower-level courses. This finding would seem to align with the NACS data and our interviews wherein upper-level students acknowledged buying fewer course materials than first-year students and sophomores.

While we were initially anxious about the costs that would be incurred once the Student Council grant money ran out, we have found that our total expenditures on textbooks generally decrease each year, since faculty members

tend to use the same basic textbooks for courses in following years. Of course, new and visiting faculty teach in new areas, requiring a higher outlay when a new course is first taught, but overall, costs have not been excessive. In 2014–15 total costs were \$6,776, which equals about 2.5 percent of our total print monographs budget, and in 2015–16 the cost went down to \$5,406, a mere 2 percent.

## **TEXTBOOK DONATION AND WORKSHOP PILOT PROGRAM**

During the summer 2015, the Dean of Students Office approached the library about ways in which we could support first-generation students. Our performing arts librarian, Donna Fournier, herself a first-generation college student, volunteered to work with the dean of first-year students on helping these students and other low-income students secure textbooks. They developed a two-pronged approach:

1. The development of a textbook collection through donations
2. An educational program including workshops and a LibGuide to help students understand the options available to them beyond the purchase of textbooks

The initial call for donations at the end of the fall and spring terms through posters and e-mail resulted in only a shelf's worth of books each time. Enter Trash to Treasures—an annual fund-raising effort that resells materials students have donated or left behind at the end of the spring semester. We were able to secure consensus from the Trash to Treasures committee that they would donate any textbooks they received or found to this collection. There were over 800 textbooks donated, of which over 500 were added to the fledgling textbook collection. Currently, these materials are housed in the Performing Arts Library and students are invited to browse and borrow what they need. The textbooks are cataloged, but the records are suppressed from public view and only students that are pre-identified by the Dean's Office are invited to use the collection. While students borrow materials for the term in which they need them, there is no penalty if they choose to keep the textbooks.

The first workshop was held in fall 2015 after students had registered for their spring courses, and a second one was held in January after students had received their syllabi. We targeted first-generation students identified through



the Dean's Office. The workshops covered the pros and cons of ownership; how to locate materials to borrow; and how to search the catalog and interlibrary loan resources to identify materials. In addition, we developed a LibGuide (<http://libguides.brynmawr.edu/swat-textbooks>) that provides guidance on "how to borrow instead of buy." The 2016–17 academic year was the first year that students had access to the collection of donated textbooks. But it is clear that it is not only first-generation or low-income students who are looking for other ways to procure needed textbooks. Whether the collection can be opened to others is a question worth revisiting with the dean of students.

## CONCLUSION

Faculty and students are concerned about the quality and the cost of textbooks. As established in the early part of the previous century, the honors program has had a continuing influence on the types and quantity of course materials that faculty assign to their students. It is unlikely that faculty patterns will change in the near future. While faculty in the large introductory courses in the sciences and social sciences may look to open educational resources to supplement course materials, it is unlikely that they will move wholesale in this direction. As the number of students on financial aid continues to increase, we will continue to educate them about their options.

### Notes

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