

# Textbook controversy not so controversial

by Natalie Pondergast

Bought any good textbooks lately? Student frustration appears proportional to the cost of textbooks at UPEI.

"I think it's an ungodly high amount to pay for books," said student Rebecca Driscoll, of the \$400 she has already spent on hers.

"It's pretty ridiculous, last year the political science books, the teacher said they were 40 dollars - this year they were 60 dollars," Ryan Bolter said. Both Driscoll and Bolter wonder where their hard-earned money is going.

Eric Gallant, manager of the Bookstore insists that the bookstore and the publishers are not trying to rob students. He says the prices generally go up from one year to the next. "A 10 per cent increase is normal from the publishers."

After the 10 per cent increase from the publisher, there is an additional mark-up in order for the Bookstore to make a profit. "We use normal industry standard - 20 per cent mark-up plus the freight cost."

But the extra 20 per cent isn't all profit, "Net profit is lower because of all the other store expenses," Gallant said.

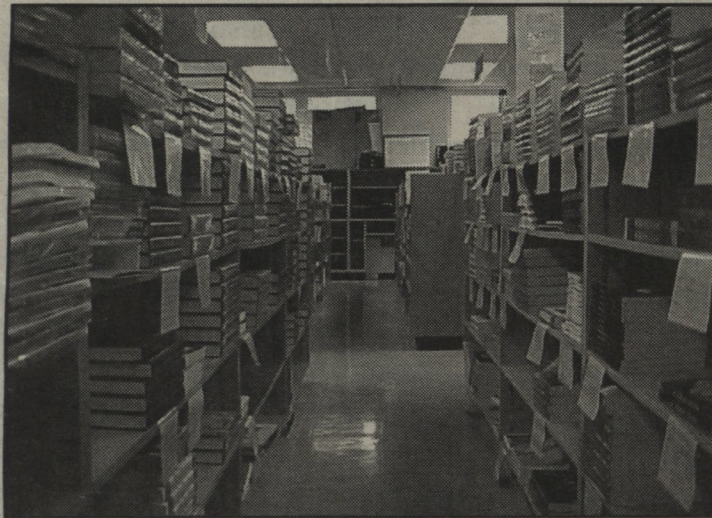
"The main complaint I have is the same one students have, most [books] are very expensive to purchase," said Gallant. Last year's Introduction to Psychology book was \$72.95 after the mark-up. The same book is now sold for \$88.75.

Gallant said the Bookstore orders from about seventy-five different publishers, since every professor has different requests. "Most publishing companies have excellent service," he said, despite their frequent increases in prices.

Student Shelly Hollinger disagrees. "Well, I just got my

Psychology book that I had to wait a week and a half for." The publishing company had delayed the order.

"I can't justify paying a hundred and fifty dollars for a hundred page book. That sort of boggles my mind," said Amanda Hamel, a second year student. She added that last year she hardly



opened two of her supposed 'required' books.

Francois Falvo, a modern language professor, writes some textbooks for his classes, at his own expense. "I make my own books," Falvo said, "Each page costs me about two cents."

Falvo writes these books because he said they are more specific to the needs of his students.

He sees no other reason for the books to be expensive than to make money for the publishers. "[They] make a point of changing the edition every two years with no valid difference between these editions," Falvo said of some of the language books.

"There is no reason for a publisher to include, in a very expensive textbook, blank exercises for the students to fill out - then the book has to be thrown out." Falvo continued, but he admits he knows the science textbooks have no choice but to be expensive.

There is new information coming out all the time, therefore new books must be written.

Paul Chaulk, psychology professor, agrees that books are expensive, but for some courses he understands why.

"Certainly in specialized courses [the publisher] would have to charge high prices in order to

recoup their investment," explained Chaulk.

There are some alternatives to buying brand new books from the Bookstore. Although the Bookstore doesn't advertise, the walls of most campus buildings

are covered with advertisements for used books.

Student Union President BJ



McCarville recommends purchasing textbooks second hand. In par-

ticular, she suggests students visit Bookpusher.com. This website allows people to buy and sell not just used books, but used CDs and records as well.

"You just type in the book you need and it'll do the search for you." MacCarville thinks the site is reliable and with only good interests in regards to the students. The site is open to everyone and is not limited to Prince Edward Island.

Bookpusher.com was designed by Silverorange.com, created by Danya James, Mark Van Ward, Daniel Burka, and Nick Burka; three of whom are UPEI students, said McCarville.

Bookpusher.com is not run through Student Union, in fact, student Union has never organised any kind of book reselling. "It's not a tradition, I guess it was never thought of before." McCarville said.

The student Union has advertised for Bookpusher.com in the student handbook as well as in campus buildings, at no charge. "We let them do it for free, as a student group," said McCarville. The money for the advertising came out of the student Union budget.

Over the years at UPEI, the shock of the highly priced books tends to wear off or some students find ways around the expensive cost.

"I just borrow [books] from other people and that's the only reason why it's cheap for me," said fourth year student Amanda Gallant, who payed 100 dollars for two books this year. □