

Textbook prices add to the rising costs of education

BY ERIN FAGAN

Many UPEI students are learning to make do with another expense intrinsic to their education -- the cost of the textbook -- thanks to a demoralizing combination of inflation, the wounded Canadian

dollar, and plain greed.

Textbook prices have increased approximately 12 percent this year according to Eric Gallant, manager of the UPEI bookstore.

This increase has been

attributed to the fact that a strong number of textbooks are published in the United States.

"One veterinary medicine text, invoiced in U.S. funds, was quoted as being

seventy-five dollars," Gallant said. "In Canadian funds...it was quoted over the phone to be \$105."

He admits that the state of the Canadian dollar does have its effect on textbook prices, but adds that a gradual increase in book prices over the past several years is also a culprit.

One UPEI professor told her class that it was "shameful" that a soft-cover textbook cost as much as fifty-six dollars, with taxes added to this amount. The situation is being felt across Canada, says Gallant.

Matt Gray, SU president, questioned the actual influence of the dollar. "The dollar hasn't dropped fifteen percent," he said.

Mian Ali, professor of Economics at UPEI, affirmed that the falling dollar is only marginally influencing prices at the moment, citing that textbooks prices and the cost of living have been increasing steadily over the past several years. He did state that imported goods cost slightly more because of the status of the dollar.

But despite avoiding the impact on the cost of crossing the border, even Canadian published texts are not immune to hikes in prices. These books often have an American influence, if only in production.

A "Canadian" edition of a psychology text was discovered actually to be bound in the U.S.

Inflation over the years is also to blame.

"When I attended university, an expensive book was about \$25," Ali added.

Gallant also said that an expensive textbook, when he first started out at the bookstore, only cost about \$50.

He speculated that frequent mergers between publishing companies over the past few years might have an influence. He ventured that reduced competition due to these mergers might be driving prices up.

Another professor summed up his opinion of the textbook situation.

"I'm not here to make the textbook companies rich, I'm here to teach. Textbooks are necessary."

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Rows of unsold textbooks in UPEI Bookstore
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