

Bargains on books for beginners

by Tara Kane

The Record (Bergen County, N.J.)

Ouch. The required textbook for your Intro to Psych course costs \$69.

Worry not, oh seekers of a higher education. For the Web-savvy, the credit-worthy, and the just-plain-resourceful among you, there are lower-cost options.

The university bookstore charges just over \$50 for a used version. But you can do a lot better than that. The same textbook can be had online through a host of fee-based auction services for around \$40. And there's even a Web site that helps you identify someone at your school with whom to bargain directly, or perhaps arrange a swap.

New William Paterson University student Marianna Proctor and her mother, Beatrice, were surprised to hear of cost-saving ways to buy the armful of books required of freshmen at the school. They had just paid \$51.75 for a used version of "Understanding Psychology."

But they had a question. Without the bookstore's handy required-reading list supplied by the professors, how would they have known what books to get?

Ah, the marvels of the digital age. Many college bookstores are linked to Efolet.com, where students with course numbers can find the books they need. The site lists the bookstore's prices for new and used books, and offers shipping for extra.

But as the Proctors learned, you can do better than the bookstore, even for used books.

The same used textbook that Marianna bought costs \$36.95 on Amazon.com. Other Web sites — getcheapbooks.com, ecampus.com and directtextbook.com — also offer used texts for less.

How? Because there is no middleman. The bookstore buys its used texts from students, who often will happily accept any cash offer. That way, the store makes much of its profit off the sale of used books.

The online services make their money by charging a fee, usually between \$2 and \$5 over the sale price.

The downside to purchasing online is that it requires a credit card, and shipping fees can be costly. That's why, last year, college grad Ben Wilson founded screwthebookstore.com — a free, online book exchange that matches buyers and sellers from the same school. "It lets students directly negotiate a price and eliminate the bookstore," said Wilson, 24.

Most campus bookstores don't feel the online competition is hurting business. There are still plenty of students, such as WPU junior Lauren Marcianiak, who prefer the old-fashioned way.

"I don't have a credit card," Marcianiak said. "For me, the bookstore is just easier."

College students rely on creativity when decorating dorm rooms



KRT PHOTO BY TOM REESE/SEATTLE TIMES

Aura Wade, left, and Stephanie Conn are shown in their dorm room at the University of Washington in Seattle on August 8, 2003.

by Stephanie Dunnewind
The Seattle Times

When University of Washington roommates Aura Wade and Stephanie Conn first saw their Lander Hall dorm room, all the furniture was lined up along either side, "with no space in the middle at all," said Conn, 19, of Spokane, Wash.

That changed quickly. Wade raised her bed and Conn fitted hers underneath in an L shape. A mini-refrigerator and storage take up the rest of the area under the bed. The roommates added corner shelves, a small round table with a crocheted lace cover, throw pillows, Christmas lights around the window and an area rug.

In the fall, the summer-school students will head to the older-style Haggatt Hall, with its built-in furniture. But their decorations — including Moulin Rouge posters for French major Wade and Marilyn Monroe pictures for fan Conn — will still blare their individual styles and interests.

"I hate when I go in a room and you can't really tell anything about their personality," said Wade, 18, of Kirkland, Wash.

As students settle into college, they'll be looking for inexpensive, space-saving ways to glam up rooms that are intentionally bland. Every year, Jean Lee is amazed by how the UW's neutral, standard rooms become "lively and interesting" with bright colors and bold patterns. "It's such a night-and-day transformation," said the facilities design manager. "No two rooms look alike."

Rather than just move everything from their home bedroom to school, experts advise students to carefully select items to fit into accommodations that are likely much smaller — and probably shared.

"Most people bring way too much stuff," said UW resident adviser Katie Handy. "You don't need to bring every pair of shoes you own."

Indeed, it's not that students bring too much in terms of a variety of stuff, but too many of the same items — such as more books, pictures and clothes than they really need, said Bryan Gould, assistant director of residence life and housing at Seattle University. At the University of Washington, residence-hall rooms range from 115 to 186 square feet for a shared room. Some universities even bunk three students to a room. Even so, "it's amazing the things that get packed into a room," Lee said. "Every year, students try to get in more and more."

Universities try to accommodate students' desire for personalized use of space. "Traditionally, most furniture was bolted to the floor — what you see is what you get," Gould said. Now schools are moving to mobile, modular furniture "so students are able to be as creative with the small space as they can."

Many universities offer some rooms with beds that can be bunked. At the University of Washington, for example, beds in its three renovated residence halls (Terry, Lander and McCarty), can be raised to different levels so students can lift individual beds and place storage or desks underneath. Or some students bunk both beds and then bring in a loveseat or small futon to fill the resulting space.

"Students come up with the most creative ideas we wouldn't ever think of ourselves," Lee said.

Gould thinks many students view their rooms more as a "living area" than simply a bedroom. "It's not just the place where they sleep," he said.

Students laugh at some of the typical decorating advice offered by adults, such as "transforming" a room through paint (absolutely not allowed) or talking with a roommate to coordinate bedspreads. Cara Carrubba, a UW junior who shared a Haggatt Hall room her freshman year and now has a single room in Hansee Hall, said she's never seen matching bedspreads and thinks a "color scheme" is probably overstating most students' design intentions.

Still, finding balance with a stranger — or even a friend — can be difficult. "I've seen one situation where they taped a line down the middle of the room," Carrubba said. "They were best friends but they knew they were so different in style."

Wade and Conn made sure they didn't duplicate refrigerators or TVs but didn't worry about clashing bedspreads.



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