

Bookstore business up for grabs here

What can be done about our bookstore?

We took the problem to Provost Theodore Gross and he feels the bookstore now serves the function as a place where students purchase their texts:

"It doesn't pretend to do anything more than that," Gross says, "but I would love to see it become a bookstore that is really attractive, a cultural center for the campus community."

If the Provost wants a better bookstore, why doesn't he do something about it? After all, doesn't he run this place? Dr. Gross says he has no power over the bookstore because it is governed by policies and administration at University Park.

That doesn't ring true.

Both Penn State Berks and Hazleton campuses have book policies different from ours. Theirs serve the students.

The trend in college bookstores is toward becoming a one-stop shop, according to the National Association of College Stores, and emphasis is placed on a larger variety of goods accessible to students with a wider range of services offered at the bookstores.

Provost Gross feels there may not be sufficient demand for such development in our

bookstore.

We disagree. Both Berks and Hazleton with less than half our student-customer levels, do a better job.

If much smaller schools can profit by providing services—especially used books which save students a significant amount—why can't we?

True, handling used books is more work but it's also more profitable. According to Bill



By Pat Wenger

McVicker, University Park Bookstore Manager, there is only a 20 percent markup on new texts whereas a 25 to 30 percent markup is possible in the used book market. The profit margin should be enticing.

It may even be enticing enough for students to go into business. Students taking mat-

ters into their own hands is a sixties trait which could revive the used book market here on campus. Joe Guberman, Managing Editor of The Lion's Tale, suggested that students start their own co-op or book swap through existing organizations on campus as a fund raiser. Sounds feasible to us. Every organization wants a fund raiser. Most organizations want to provide a service, too—so we can combine them both.

This solution, of course, points up the dreadful inefficiencies of our bookstore. As Capitol Times reporter Bill Negley said: "Comparing

Capitol's bookstore with one like Franklin and Marshall's store is like comparing a 7-11 store with Gimbels. There just is no comparison."

In pursuing the bookstore problem, we have never come across an issue which inspired such total agreement for both students and the faculty. Virtually everyone said that no one has done anything and that the bookstore needs to be drastically changed to serve the students of Capitol Campus.

But apparently people in power think it is like the weather, you can talk about it, but you can't do anything about it.

We disagree.

As a paper and as a student body it is time to act.

Editor's note:

While researching and interviewing for our article on the bookstore, we encountered individuals who wished to make additional comment that we were restricted from printing by space limitations. They subsequently submitted letters to the editor.

Letters

Dear Editor:

As a graduating senior, I would like to make a suggestion that would be beneficial to students at Capitol. During the past two years I have spent an enormous amount of money on textbooks. Some of these books I will keep as reference material, but many will just collect dust as they become obsolete. I would be happy to sell these books — IF there were a specific time and place in which to do so. I would like to suggest that some club or organization on campus sponsor a used book sale twice a year. Students could purchase books at a fraction of the cost, the sponsoring organization could take a percentage of the money as a fund raiser, and everyone would benefit. With the escalating cost of education, students need all the financial help they can get.

Sincerely,
David J. Boyd
Business Admin.

Dear Editor:

A campus bookstore should be an inviting and congenial place, no matter how small nor how heavily centered on text-book sales. The staff should consist of people who have a special interest in—if not love of—books: from their most pragmatic value to their appearance and heft. They should also consider themselves in service to the people who buy and in general care for books, not begrudging every response to a slightly exceptional request or acting cold or downright rude in answer to even ordinary questions.

Especially because there is no "good" bookstore for browsers or special interest readers in this area, the Capitol bookstore has the responsibility of meeting some of their needs, modestly but with concern. That means a browsing area that includes even single copies of little magazines not available in the library, a group of intellectually vital books—perhaps remainders or at discount—that indicate that a campus is a place for ideas; a few paperbacks by contemporary poets and novelists; a line of very attractive (not puerile) cards. In short, home, and girly magazines anywhere. The store should sell some items we can't get without going to a major city, perhaps including a small collection of fine recordings or tapes. It may well be that if students were randomly polled that their responses would not indicate a strong desire for such a place. That may only demonstrate, however, that you don't desire what you can't imagine would ever be available. Where else but in college can a person have his/her sights raised? A bookstore should stretch people's imaginations, not squelch them. We haven't come near to that ideal at Capitol.

Dr. Theodora Graham

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