Reducing the Cost of Textbooks
Susan Mossing, Assistant Director

According to a recent report by CollegeBoard (2010), the average student at a public four-year college or university spends $1,137 per year on books and supplies. This enormous cost puts a strain on students, often leading them to forgo purchasing textbooks and even finishing their degree (IHL, 2007). The University of Mississippi is working on a number of actions to reduce the rising cost of textbooks.

The Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) Textbook Initiative, which started in 2007 after demands by student groups, including our Associated Student Body (ASB), has resulted in various efforts to stem the rising costs of textbooks. To be in compliance with components of federal law, the IHL Textbook Policy requires faculty to post adopted textbook assignments by deadlines that correspond to the first day of priority registration. The purpose of these early postings of textbook assignments, including ISBN numbers and titles, is to enable students to be informed consumers. The Textbook Policy also urges the adoption of the same materials for all sections of a course and the re-adoption of a textbook for two or three years. The purpose of these recommendations is to enhance the local volume of used books. The Ole Miss Bookstore has been an early participant in a book rental program and has also promoted the sale and rental of e-textbooks.

An additional step being taken by the University of Mississippi to reduce textbook costs is the development of open education resources (OER). Last March, the Center invited Dr. Joel Thierstein, Associate Provost of Rice University and Executive Director of Connexions, to talk about OER at a Faculty Development Luncheon (Connexions/Consortium, 2011). OER modules are free and accessible online from repositories such as Connexions (cnx.org) and can be assembled and customized for use in UM courses. Faculty members can adopt OER modules and entire online textbooks as well as contribute to the OER repositories. This summer, faculty members from the departments of Political Science and Chemistry and Biochemistry developed OER modules with the Center’s first OER Grants.

Drs. Miguel Centellas and Jake Kathman developed stand-alone modules to teach research writing within political science. Two complete modules have already been uploaded into Connexions—"Failed States" and "The Welfare State"—and more will be uploaded soon. According to Centellas, in both modules students are exposed not just to substantive (albeit brief) discussions of the key concepts and ideas, but they are also exposed to empirical data. The modules’ assessment tools are geared not only to test students’ ability to comprehend the readings, but to actually use the data to learn basic quantitative analysis. Finally, each module includes some ideas for short writing assignments that ask students to work on connecting the module’s contents with a practical application.

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No More Paper - eTextbooks Are Here to Stay
By Penny Rice, Faculty Technology Development Center

Electronic Textbooks, also known as eTextbooks, are becoming more popular among college students today for a variety of reasons. Students like the ease of purchase and immediate access via download, so there's no more waiting in long lines at the bookstore. Purchase prices are generally less expensive than printed textbooks, with some companies allowing rentals or purchases on a per chapter basis. But perhaps the most liked feature of eTextbooks is their ease of access anytime and anywhere. Gone are the days of lugging around 20 pounds of textbooks in a backpack. With the advance of e-readers, such as the iPad, multiple textbooks can be installed on one lightweight device that can easily be carried wherever one goes. This makes studying between classes, while waiting on the bus, or anytime a spare moment presents itself, easy and convenient.

There are several types of eTextbooks, the simplest being a .pdf file. Slightly more advanced are eReader versions of textbooks that allow one to navigate by flipping pages as in a printed book. Some even provide the ability to highlight text and make annotations. Interactive eTextbooks allow for highlighting and annotation of text along with advanced options like embedded multimedia, quizzes, and sharing of notes and thoughts directly to social networking sites.

Over the past month, I've reviewed several eTextbook applications for the iPad. Three stand out at the top of the market, CourseSmart, Kno, and Inkling. While each has its own set of advantages, I was especially impressed with the Inkling app's interactive features.

CourseSmart (www.coursesmart.com) has one of the greatest selection of eTextbooks available, with over 90% of core North American Higher Education textbooks available in eTextbook format. One feature of CourseSmart books is that the electronic pages look identical to print textbooks and even have the same pagination. So when an instructor says to turn to page 235, students will be able to locate the correct page no matter if they have the eText or print version of the textbook. Using the CourseSmart app for the iPad, students can take notes, highlight text, search on specific text or topics, and add bookmarks. While font sizes can't be changed in the CourseSmart app, screen zooming is allowed, although zooming too much can cause pixelation of the text and images.

Kno (www.kno.com), another app available for the iPad, is unique in its approach to eTextbooks. The Kno app allows students to group books by semester and course. Students can even add other documents in pdf format into the Kno application. This is a nice organizational feature that lets students group documents together into the same class area within the app. As with CourseSmart, Kno allows uses to highlight text, take notes, and search the text for specific words. Kno also goes a step further by providing the option to branch out and search wikipedia or the web and to send messages from within the app to Twitter or Facebook. Images within the text can be zoomed to full screen simply by double-tapping. A journal feature lets students create a digital notebook by clipping text and images from the textbook. With its claim of 100,000 eTextbooks, Kno rivals CourseSmart in terms of the volume of eTexts currently available.

Inkling (www.inkling.com) is the third iPad app reviewed. While it does not have as many textbooks currently available as Kno and CourseSmart, it stands out as providing many interactive features, such as embedded audio and video, 3D models, quizzes and self assessment features, and social note sharing. Music textbooks come to life with audio selections available directly within the text. See a 3D diagram of the human heart and rotate it with the flick of a finger in a Biology book. Connect with other students and share notes and highlighted textbook passages through Twitter and Facebook. Inkling also provides the option of purchasing textbook chapters separately. This allows the student to purchase only the chapters needed, rather than having to buy the entire textbook.

Expect to see eTextbooks grow in popularity over the next few years as textbook publishers invest more time and resources into the conversion of text based books into interactive eTextbooks and as students modify their study habits to embrace the digital format.
Open Education Resources (OER)

OER Commons — http://www.oercommons.org/ serves as a link to a variety of OER materials related to teaching, technology, and research.

Connexions — http://www.cnx.org is the largest repository of resources and operates under the Creative Commons attribution license.

Open.Michigan — http://open.umich.edu/ serves as a gateway to educational projects, resources and research developed by University of Michigan faculty, students, and others, and made available to the global learning community.

MIT Open Courseware — http://ocw.mit.edu includes podcasts, lecture notes, textbooks, assignments, tests, etc., that are free and accessible to the public

iTunes U — More than 800 universities have active iTunes U sites, including UM; about half of these institutions (e.g., Stanford, Yale, MIT, Oxford, UC Berkeley) make their content publicly available. Other organizations ‘Beyond Campus’ also offer free audio and video files such as Museum of Modern Art, the New York Public Library, Public Radio International, and PBS stations.

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The modules designed by Drs. Steve Davis and Jason Ritchie aims to supplement current learning materials, allowing students to save money by using older editions of the Chemistry 105 textbook. The modules consist of on-line notes and solutions for homework problems that describe freshman chemistry concepts in much more detail than textbooks currently in print, and in-class Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL) exercises to help learn more deeply through a collaborative discovery-based process. Students in Chemistry 105 are currently benefiting from the use of these and they will be uploaded soon into Connexions to benefit a wider audience.

According to Dr. Maurice Eftink, The University has recently submitted its first annual report to the IHL office regarding textbook sales, including the price and purchasing option for UM’s top-20 enrollment courses. Information about the textbooks for these high enrollment courses will be tracked to assess whether these efforts help stem the escalation of textbook expenses. The University also intends to continue exploring the use of open education resources, e-textbooks, tablets and e-readers in the classroom, both as less expensive options for students and as tools to enhance instruction.

If you would like more information on these or other OER modules for use in your class, call us or check out the OER repositories (see listing above) and consider applying for the next OER grants in late spring. We hope that you will consider ways that you can help reduce the rising cost of textbooks for students.

References:

Bubbl.us—Create colorful brainstorms and mind maps online. Share and work with friends, embed your mind map in your blog or website, email and print your mind map and save your mind map as an image.
https://bubbl.us/

iSpring—PowerPoint to Flash converter creates web friendly Flash movies from PowerPoint.
http://www.ispringsolutions.com

printfriendly—Make any web page print friendly.
http://www.printfriendly.com/

SurveyMonkey—Design survey, collect responses, analyze results.
http://www.surveymonkey.com/

TEACHING AND LEARNING

TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

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3
ACADEMIC SUCCESS TRAINING WORKSHOPS
http://olemiss.edu/depts/cetl/AST.html

Held in 201 Hill Hall, 4-4:50 p.m. – No reservation is required, but please be prompt.

Aug. 30-Sep. 1 and Oct. 18-20
Time Management: Managing time is a life skill that is crucial in academe. Unlike high school and work settings, time in university settings is less structured by outside requirements. A university student must construct a time plan to be successful. This workshop addresses means and tools for creating good time plans for academic success.

Sep. 6-8 Bring your syllabi!
Goal Setting: Students who decide to not know where they are going until they get there may find unpleasant places. Successful students decide where they want to go and then create an action plan to get there. This workshop addresses strategies toward creating and achieving goals.

Sep. 13-15 and Oct. 25-27
Making and Using Notes: Making class notes from which you can effectively learn is an essential skill. It involves actively listening, organizing, and thinking in order to create useful notes. This workshop involves considerations and strategies to support the types of activities and habits involved for making and using good notes for academic success.

Sep. 20-22 and Nov. 1-3
Strategic Reading for Recollection and Comprehension: Reading is one of the primary means of gathering information at the university. Reading well, then, is fundamental to your success. This workshop addresses strategies you can use to improve your reading skills and associated study skills.

Sep. 27-29 and Nov. 8-10
Critical Thinking: Many students are surprised to discover that the acts of memorizing and summarizing information are insufficient for university success. This workshop introduces concepts and strategies related to higher order thinking.

Oct. 4-6 and Nov. 15-17
Concept Mapping: Concept mapping is a useful technique to graphically organize information. It provides students opportunities to discover the relationships among pieces of information and to create a visual representation of them. This workshop provides strategies for creating and using concept maps.

Oct. 11-13 and Nov. 29-Dec. 1
Preparing for The Test: Tests are a part of academic life. This workshop focuses on test preparation in terms of time management, various kinds of tests and test items, and techniques for studying to support not only information recall, but also critical analysis.
FACULTY DEVELOPMENT LUNCHEONS
http://olemiss.edu/depts/cetl/special_events.html

Held in the Union Ballroom, 12 p.m. Please check website for possible changes.

September 7, 2011
Topic: **UM 2020: A Bold Vision for our University**
Dr. Noel Wilkin and Mr. Jim Morrison (UM)

October 4, 2011
Topic: **Teaching with Technology**
Dr. Maurice Eftink and Panel of Faculty and Staff (UM)

October 14, 2011
Topic: **New and Improved PowerPoint Presentations**

November 2, 2011
Topic: **Internationalization of the Curriculum**
Dr. Gil Latz, Portland State University

March 6, 2012
Topic: **Wikipedia in Higher Education**
Dr. Pete Forsyth, Wiki Strategies

March 27, 2012
Topic: **Teaching Hybrid Courses**
Panel of Faculty (UM)

April 11, 2012
Topic: **Developing Service Learning Courses**
Dr. Stephen Monroe & Faculty Members of the College of Liberal Arts (UM)

Please RSVP to Sarah Hill at 1391 or email shill@olemiss.edu. If you require special assistance related to a disability, please contact the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at 662-915-1391.
Final Supplemental Instruction (SI) Report
By Dr. Nancy Wiggers, Learning Specialist

Approximately one quarter of the students enrolled in the SI pilot courses (Bisc 160, 162; Chem 105, 106; Accy 201, 201) attended SI sessions and experienced success both in learning and in grades and valued the experiences they had. Reportedly, SI students saw immediate application and value to a content-oriented approach in an environment that allowed them to interact with peers involved in similar learning tasks. Several students commented that talking and quizzing with peers helped them not only to monitor their understanding, but also to gain deeper understanding of the material. In addition, many students commented that the weekly sessions mitigated their tendency to procrastinate and forced them to move beyond a dependence on studying via memorization. Students also attributed SI attendance in helping them recover from failing grades on initial exams and SI leaders in encouraging them to remain in the courses.

DFW rates for students who attended SI were lower than for students who did not attend SI. Correlation analysis suggested no significant difference between the two groups of students in terms of ACT; therefore, SI students were not better students academically.