

FLORIDA EXPERIMENTS WITH ONLINE TEXTBOOKS TO SAVE MONEY

By KATHLEEN HAUGHNEY
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THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, Sept. 24, 2009.....Pay \$200 for a O-chem book at the campus bookstore or \$0 for an online version? Tough choice? Not really. And it may become a reality for some Florida students in the near future.

The University Press of Florida is partnering with Orange Grove, an online open access depository for academic materials, that would make books available to Florida college students for free. It's still in the early stages with about 90 books currently a part of the system, but the University Press is working to add other books to the list, reaching out to writers who may be interested in participating in the new initiative.

It's being touted as a way to save students and their families some money at a time when college costs are going up.

"You get the book for free, you can read it online as much as you want, you can even download it to your own computer," said Florida Board of Governors spokesman Bill Edmonds.

The books can come from a variety of sources, said Dennis Lloyd, director of sales and marketing for University Press of Florida. Sometimes, the rights to a textbook may revert to the author under his or her publishing contract, or the publishing house may simply choose to experiment with the open access and offer it up for free.

"They don't want to make money off of this," he said.

Students and parents have long bemoaned the rising costs of textbooks, which can often cost more than \$100 for one book. Research released by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group found that students spend an average of \$900 per year on books. And they don't always get a lot of that money back.

Many bookstores will buy back books, but at a significantly lower cost than what they were sold for originally. Some stores will not buy certain books back because they also come with a CD that expires. The costs have in turn sent many students running to sites like Amazon.com where they can obtain older copies of texts for cheaper rates.

Lloyd said the University Press is hoping the idea will attract some attention for professors and students who are interested in experimenting with open access technology. And for some students, who will still prefer to have a physical copy of the book, they can pay a much lower price to have a hard copy printed and bound. However, it will be a paperback, and not the typical hardback textbook normally sold in stores.

For example, Images of the Woman Reader in Victorian British and American Fiction by Catherine J. Golden, sells retail as a hardcover book for \$59.95. But through the Orange Grove system, it would be available bound in paper for \$29.50 or read online for free.

However, that doesn't mean professors will be lining up at the door to use the new system.

"The wild card is whether the professors will choose to assign the books on Orange Grove or whether they choose to use the more traditional books," Lloyd said.

State University System Chancellor Frank Brogan and Community College Chancellor Willis Holcombe both released statements of support for the new program.

"This entrepreneurial partnership is testing new waters in book publishing to offer flexibility for professors and less expensive textbooks for students. I'm proud that this innovation is coming out of Florida's higher-education community, and I'm excited about the future possibilities this experiment could bring to how we manage textbook costs," Brogan said in a release.

Brogan will be announcing the new program at today's Board of Governors meeting, along with representatives for the University Press of Florida and Orange Grove.

The Orange Grove Web site can be accessed at <http://www.theorangegrove.org>.

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