



Textbooks: Frequently Asked Questions



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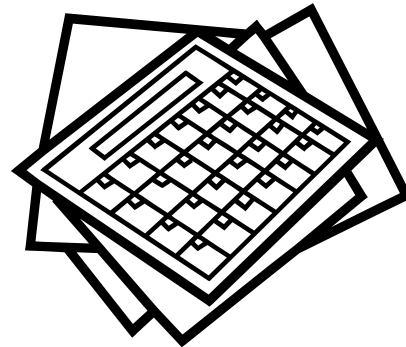


I. Deadlines

1. **We know it doesn't take months for textbooks to arrive from a publisher these days - why do we have to turn in our book adoptions so early?**
2. **I was just assigned a class at the last minute, and it's after the deadline already. Does this mean you won't order my books?**

- Data entry: Verifying and entering into our textbook program all the information for each course and each title per major quarter takes a lot of time, and this step must be completed before buyback or publisher orders can take place.
- Research: Calling about new editions, potential stock problems, etc. also takes time. If a book has gone out of print and must be replaced, it may take several weeks for you to find and review desk copies from which to choose your replacement. Custom publications and duplicated works take time to arrange and obtain permissions.
- Most importantly, it is next to impossible to obtain used textbooks if adoptions are not turned in as soon as possible. Our best source for used books is students, and in order to buy books from them we have to know which books we'll need. Our next best source, wholesale used book companies such as Nebraska Book Company, Follett Campus Resources, Missouri Textbook Exchange, and others, operate in a very competitive market in which the first stores to begin ordering are more likely to get the used books.

No, of course it doesn't mean that. What it does mean is that the chances of finding used books are greatly reduced, and the likelihood of stock problems, shipping SNAFUS or other unforeseen problems delaying the arrival of your books is increased. We understand that some late orders are just inevitable and we'll do everything we can to deal with them swiftly. However, situations like this make it all the more important for everyone else to turn their adoptions in on time. We can deal with a few stragglers at the last minute, but not several hundred of them!



For all these reasons, we have established the following adoption deadlines for each quarter:

- Fall quarter text orders due May 12th or the following business day.
- Winter quarter text orders due Oct. 30th or the following business day.
- Spring quarter text orders due Jan. 30th or the following business day.
- Summer quarter text orders due April 30th or the following business day.

Your cooperation in complying with these deadlines will make it much easier for us to provide the best service to students.

II. Textbook Prices & the necessity of used books

1. Why do textbooks cost so much, anyway?

Several factors have contributed to the sharp rise in costs over the past several years:

- The growing used book market has meant a decreasing market share for publishers.
- Mergers and buyouts among the major publishers have created a large debt load that textbooks are paying for in part.
- Media conglomerates that expect a higher profit margin on all their products than textbooks used to provide now own many of the bigger textbook publishers.
- High return rates from bookstores have contributed to higher overhead.
- Production costs have risen, especially the costs associated with the more complex supplements and instructor ancillaries provided by publishers (videos, CDRoms, transparencies, etc.).

The bookstore's average margin on new textbooks, 21%, is at the lowest end of industry norms and has not changed for years. The increases come strictly from publishers. At present, it doesn't seem likely that the cycle will stop or even slow appreciably. While we recognize that textbooks are an increasing financial burden for students, we really can't reduce our prices while publishers are increasing theirs. What we can do is try to reduce the overall cost to students by providing as many used books as possible.

2. Why so much emphasis on used books?

Actually, the group that gains the most from used textbooks is students. In today's world of soaring educational costs and falling levels of aid, students literally demand the savings of used books. They are often willing to put up with texts that are in less than pristine condition if it will stretch their textbook budget that much further.

In fact, the single question/complaint we hear most often from students during book "rush" is "Why aren't there more used copies of the books I need?" If we had no used copies of a particular title, or if they have all sold, students will literally dump the piles of new books onto the floor, looking for the one used copy they hope might be hidden at the back of the shelf.

3. But surely the bookstore sells only new copies of lab books, study guides, etc.?

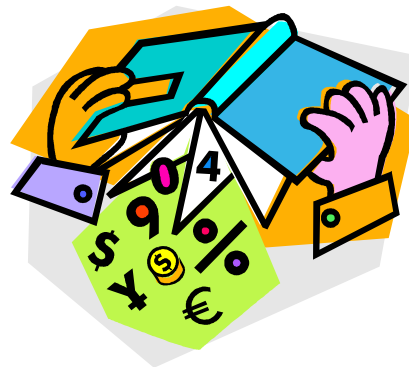
Not necessarily. If we know that a particular course doesn't actually require the fill-in (or "consumable" in industry jargon) portion of a workbook/lab manual, or if we think we can get reasonably clean (defined as less than 10 pages marked on) copies we will still try to provide at least some used copies to save students money. However, if an instructor or department specifically requests on the adoption forms that we carry only new copies we will honor that request.

4. What about custom packages don't they save students more money than used books?

It depends on the package. Is the supplement something students actually would use, if it were sold separately? Is it likely to slow down production and shipping considerably? There are many issues to consider in any package "deal" beyond the initial price quoted to you by a sales rep, and you should always let the bookstore know if you're thinking of adopting a package.

Custom packages can affect students right to a refund and can affect their ability to sell back their books at buyback. Students cannot reuse software or Internet passwords that come in text packages.

Remember, for students at SFCC value equates to how well they've used their textbook. Instructors create the value by using the text for assignments, research and exams.



VALUE = USAGE

For further information, please see our "Customization & Bundling brochure.

III. Textbook Quantities - how much does the bookstore order?

1. I always request more than enough books for my classes but sometimes the bookstore runs out. How can this happen?

The truth is that the enrollment number listed on adoption forms is not and never has been a firm order for textbook quantities. It is instead an estimate of how many students will take the class.

From that number, we look at a number of factors to determine how many books we will probably be able to sell, including:

- Past sales history for a given title
- Enrollment history for a particular course and instructor
- Enrollment projections from the college
- Length of time a title has been used on this campus (the more quarters a book is used, the fewer copies we sell, generally)

Our goal should be to have exactly one copy of each adopted title left over at the middle of each quarter. That way we know we didn't grossly over-order, but we didn't miss a student either. In practice, it rarely works out that way - we always have some titles that don't sell at all, and no matter how carefully we make our decisions there are always a few titles we sell out of. In those cases, however, we are always happy to reorder books rush freight to minimize the waiting period for students missing books.

The longer any particular text buyer works at a school, the more accurate his or her projections should become. However, departments should ALWAYS notify the bookstore if there is some special circumstance with a class that would make more than the usual number of students buy the book - i.e. the class has been heavily advertised for the first time, or it's become a required prerequisite for another popular class, or additional sections have been added.

2. Checking enrollments makes sense, but don't you order one book for each student in the class?

If only it were that simple! No, textbook sales and enrollment are hardly ever a one-to-one correlation, for several reasons:

- Students are "savvy" shoppers these days - they wait to see if the book marked "required" on the tag is really going to be necessary to pass the class. If they don't need it, they won't buy it.
- Students arrange to purchase and share texts in groups, and then study together.

- Even without a competing bookstore across the street or down the block, the campus bookstore is far from the only source for textbooks. Students buy from each other, or "inherit" books from friends or relatives who took the same class recently. They also buy books on-line, and scour other colleges in the area for more used copies, or cheaper prices.

3. I thought it didn't matter if books were over-ordered, because the bookstore can return all the extras - right?

Not necessarily. We can't return most used copies at all. Even for new textbooks, most publishers penalize bookstores for returns over 15-20% of the total orders. Many smaller publishers allow only very limited returns or no returns at all. State publications, photocopied course packs, and similar items are all completely non-returnable.

4. I always use the same books, so it shouldn't matter if you have a lot left over from term to term.

Again, that is not necessarily true. While it's true that books don't "spoil" if left on the shelf, they do get worn, scuffed and dog-eared, possibly becoming damaged enough to be un-saleable.

Also, since editions change so frequently and publisher representatives market new texts so aggressively these days, bookstores can't afford to bank on the "always" adoption and keep several semesters' worth of a textbook on hand.

Overstock sitting on the shelves represents dollars that are tied up in inventory that cannot be used for other things. These dollars are then not available at year-end for campus improvements.



IV. The adoptions form themselves.

1. How are the adoption forms distributed?

Currently, the Bookstore prints out adoption forms reflecting what each department used the previous year at least four weeks before the adoption deadline. We then give these forms along with an instruction letter to a designated textbook “contact,” usually the department chair for each department. This person is then responsible for making sure that each instructor gets the forms she or he needs. We can of course change the way any department’s forms are distributed if need be.

2. Am I filling them out right?

We hope that words like “term” “dept” “course” “section” “instructor” are pretty self-explanatory. Some of the other parts of the form may need explanation:

- Anticipated enrollment” refers to how many students you actually expect to take the course. It does not refer to the room limit, nor (as explained before) is it a firm order for a specific quantity of books. Please be accurate and realistic with that figure, and don’t try to “psych out” the bookstore by putting vastly inflated enrollment numbers in order to “trick” us into ordering a higher number of textbooks.
- Make sure book information includes the **author**, **title**, **ISBN** and **publisher**. Remember that the correct ISBN to order books for students is usually NOT the same as the instructor copy’s ISBN.
- If there is a package or custom edition or anything at all unusual about the title make sure you include that information.
- Please make it clear if a given title is consumable (fill-in) - we can’t always tell from the title - and if so, if it is all right for the Bookstore to sell used copies.
- If you will be using the **same** materials - same author, title, edition, everything, just circle yes and required or optional. If you will be using additional items write them out below. If you will **not** be using the same book circle no. New editions, bundles, custom versions of textbooks all count as **new** adoptions - please include **all** pertinent information.

- **Clearly** mark whether titles are required or optional. “Required” means that students will need this book to pass the class, not that the instructor thinks it’s a good book to have on hand.
 - **“Is this a continuation course?”** If a class is taught over the course of two or more quarters, where the same group of students will be enrolled using the same book, please note that on your textbook requisition form. Continuation courses are not just courses taught repeatedly every semester.
- ### 3. I don’t require books for my classes - do I still need to turn in adoption?

We like to have that information as well, because it helps us better answer students’ questions.

If you don’t require books per se, but there are specific supplies - i.e. art supplies, computer disks, a particular type of notebook, etc.- that you do require consider listing that on an adoption form. That lets us know to be sure to have those items in stock, and also helps us serve students.

4. Do I turn mine in directly to the Bookstore when I’m done?

That is up to each department. Some prefer to have all adoptions go through the department chair or secretary before we get them back, others don’t seem to care as long as the books come in.

*Check with
your
department
chair first.*



V. What does the bookstore *do* with adoptions once they're turned in?

1. Research & Data entry.

When we receive an adoption or batch of adoptions, we verify the book information (author, title, ISBN, etc.), check current inventory (if any) and look up sales and enrollment history for that book. Once we've made our decision about quantities to provide and made our best guess about how many we'll be able to buy back from students we enter the information into our inventory management system.

2. Want-Listing.

As soon as adoptions are entered into the system we begin sending "want lists that list the books we're hoping to order and the amounts we need" to used book companies. We ask these wholesalers to "bin" any books they have for us until a certain date, and then ship our orders.

We keep this process up several times a week from the day we get our first adoption for a term until after orders to publishers are cut. So, if you make any changes in your texts or if a class is canceled, we need to know right away in order to cancel any "holds" we might have for those titles.

3. Buyback.

We buy books from students at the end of every quarter, during finals week. What a student is offered for those books depends on whether we've received adoptions for the next quarter yet or not.

We count on most students bringing back most of their books except those that would make good references for future majors or careers. Generally speaking, for books adopted quarter after quarter, we hope to buy at least half of what we sold the previous term.

Buyback is dependent on adoptions, though. If we don't know for sure that we need a book, we can only offer the student the going national wholesale price, usually 10-20% of the retail price, and then we ship it to Nebraska Book Company. Only those books that we know for sure will be used the next quarter are bought at 50% of the original price and kept for the store.

4. Publisher orders.

About 6 – 8 weeks before the start of the quarter, we stop want listing and place our purchase orders with publishers for all the books we weren't able to fill through our buyback estimates and the wholesalers.

We place as many of these as possible through an electronic system called PUBNET that sends us a confirmation sheet for each order listing prices, backorders, canceled books,

substitutions, etc. We then attempt to notify the departments and instructors of any problems that have arisen and the potential solution options. Other orders are faxed or phoned in, and we try to get those confirmed as well.

These orders begin arriving within a week to two weeks after that, and it takes us a while to get everything unpacked, priced, and shelved. Occasionally during this period problems that weren't listed on the confirmations crop up - shortages, wrong books, etc. - that go undetected at first until the initial chaos has been cleaned up, but once we are aware of a problem we contact the publisher immediately. We will let the instructor know (if he or she wasn't the one to let US know!) as well, and tell him/her the steps being taken to make the correction.

5. Shelf Tags

After the orders are placed, we print shelf tags and place them on the sales floor where the books are supposed to go. The information on shelf tags come directly from the adoption information we entered.

6. Course reports.

As soon as we have enough adoptions to make the information meaningful, we run regular reports listing the books each department has adopted. We send these reports to the textbooks contact person in each department to review for accuracy. We encourage all faculty to check these lists and make sure that what we entered from the adoption forms is what they intend to use. Our hope is that regular review of these lists will catch any errors or omissions long before the books are on the shelf (or in students' hands).

In closing:

The SFCC Bookstore staff is here to serve students and faculty by ensuring that required class materials are available and correct. We believe the best way to accomplish this is for instructors and bookstore staff to work together and communicate.

Please feel free to contact us anytime with your questions or concerns regarding textbooks or stop by the store and visit.

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Bruce Chesterman, SFCC Textbook Buyer x3573
Sandra Marlow, SFCC Bookstore Supervisor x3782
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