

THE EXPONENT ONLINE

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OPINIONS

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Online textbooks would defray cost for students

Front Page	You can buy clothes online, listen to music, read the news, watch trailers for upcoming movies and even shop for your groceries.
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City	Now, some Purdue professors are making it possible for students to save money on textbooks, thanks to the Internet.
Features	Bradley Lucier, a professor of math at Purdue, makes his textbooks available online to his students for a mere \$10 individual licensing fee. That's not only much cheaper than a majority of textbooks a student will ever have to buy, but it's far cheaper than a CD or even a case of cheap, crappy beer.
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Classifieds	Professors like Lucier do a great service to students, especially those who come from families strapped for cash. Textbooks have been one of many aspects of college that have become progressively more expensive over the last several years. Blame could fall on any number of entities for outrageous book prices, but online textbooks provide a viable solution to reverse the upward trend of textbook prices.
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Since online textbooks need no binding, pages or any other concrete materials (aside from a few megabytes of server space, perhaps), they are far cheaper than their archaic, paper-based cousins. Students are able to save money, professors are able to teach class successfully and the only losers are the textbook publishers that have been gouging students for far too long.

Of course, there are obvious drawbacks to online texts. Students would have to be in front of a computer to read class assignments, something that bothers many individuals. Also, mass printing of pages may occur to facilitate homework or studying away from a monitor, which could put an unnecessary burden on campus printers. If online texts become more prevalent and printing of said textbooks occur en masse, ITaP might be forced to restrict the number of pages a student prints per semester, much like other Big Ten universities.

If ITaP did have to restrict the number of pages printed, Kinkos or the local Copymat could print out the book for a fraction of the cost of the hard cover version.

That issue, however, is a long way off. We urge Purdue professors to investigate online textbook possibilities the next time they are faced with choosing a new text for their course, especially when the only difference between their old text and the one they're selecting is the volume number. The financial savings students would enjoy may not directly relate to better grades, but it would certainly reduce the grumblings of students forced to take on part-time jobs to pay for \$200 texts.

The Editorial Board is: Charise Pettit, Evan Kelsay, Nic Baumann, Jamie Giles, Nate Hall, Matt Poston

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