



## Survey shows students prefer printed textbooks; 25 percent prefers digital format

By: Annie Harrison

College students are notorious for texting and tweeting, but one thing most do not prefer reading in a digital format are textbooks.

According to a recent survey conducted by Student Public Interest Research Groups, 75 percent of students surveyed said they preferred textbooks in a print format, while 25 percent preferred digital. Only 47 percent of the students said they would be comfortable using at least one of the digital textbook formats.

SBX Manager John Belco said e-books have been around since the 1980s, but people have not fully adopted them. He said many college students are already comfortable with the function and format of print textbooks.

“Although it’s been technologically obsolete for years, it’s still the preferred format,” he said.

CMU Bookstore Director Barry Waters said e-readers such as the iPad are good for recreational reading, but they are not the answer to digital textbooks. He said print textbooks are more convenient and easier to read.

“The advantages are you can write in it, you can highlight it, and you don’t have to have electricity to read it,” he said in an e-mailed statement.

Belco said although e-books are cheaper than new print textbooks, renting or buying used books are inexpensive alternatives. He said e-books will not be popular until e-readers become more affordable and use a standard format.

Different brands of e-readers are compatible with different types of files.

“There is no industry standard,” Belco said.

## A difficult switch

Textbook publishers are pushing e-books for economic reasons, rather than ecological, Belco said. He said they are focused more on business than on green technology.

Waters said publishers are trying to increase the prices of print textbooks so that more people will switch over to e-books.

“The problem with that is, only a very small number of students are interested in e-books,” he said, “And the perfect device for reading a college textbook digitally has not been created.”

Pleasant Ridge senior Samantha Wunderlich said she likes when textbooks have online components, such as practice quizzes and study guides. However, she prefers to use print textbooks.

Wunderlich said she often makes notes in her textbooks to help her study. She also comprehends the material better when it is in print than when it is online.

“I usually do a lot of highlighting and I skim back through what I’ve highlighted,” she said.

New Era sophomore Jake White said he is interested in e-books, but has not tried them.

“I haven’t utilized e-books because I don’t know much about them,” he said.

White said he rents his books through Chegg.com because it is cheaper than buying them.

Waters believes print textbooks will be around for at least another decade. He said e-books allow people to quickly distribute information, but there are better alternatives to printed textbooks.

“I really think the future is more open-source course materials,” he said.

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