

CAMPUS ACTIVITY CENTRE

Bookstore Response TO TRUSU

March 2017

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TRU Bookstore welcomes feedback on the services it provides and looks forward to working with all members of our community to improve the overall campus retail experience.

In response to the TRU Students' Union (TRUSU) Budget Consultation Report (17/18) received by the university in September 2016, the following actions will be taken to address students' concerns with the Bookstore at TRU.

To provide greater returns to students selling used textbooks and lower prices for students buying them, the TRU Bookstore will:

- review current processes and the value of purchasing used textbooks
- more effectively communicate the textbook buyback process ([SellBack](#)) and its value to our students

To establish a comprehensive system of textbooks on reserve in the Library with sufficient copies to meet demand, the TRU Bookstore will:

- provide information on current editions and titles being used in courses for each semester

TRUSU's request to establish a comprehensive system of textbooks is a library matter, not in the purview of the TRU Bookstore.

To provide incentives or supports for instructors to adopt textbooks from the BC Open Textbook program, the TRU Bookstore will:

- continue to support faculty in textbook selection

To extend hours of operation in the TRU Bookstore with the possibility of increased student employment or window service, the TRU Bookstore will:

- review hours of operation to ensure we are meeting the needs of our students
- explore the use of a specialized vending machine to deliver stationery items for students during non-business hours.

To enhance the flexibility of the Bookstore's return policy for textbooks and course material, the TRU Bookstore will:

- review the current textbook return policy and identify opportunities for improvement
- provide better communication on the current return policy

Fellowship for open textbook creation

TRUSU's request to establish a fellowship for instructors to create open textbooks in partnership with the BC Open Textbook program is an academic matter, not in the purview of the TRU Bookstore. This request is referred to the Provost's Office.

INTRODUCTION

The TRU Bookstore adheres closely to our mission in providing goods and services at the lowest possible price consistent with sound business policies. We will do our absolute best to provide the highest level of service and products that meet our customers' needs. We will continually strive to meet our financial responsibility as a member of the Thompson Rivers University community.

Over the years, the TRU Bookstore has moved quickly to adopt new delivery methods for course materials with the intention of saving students money. Despite these efforts, the cost of textbooks and course materials in Canada has increased dramatically over the last decade.



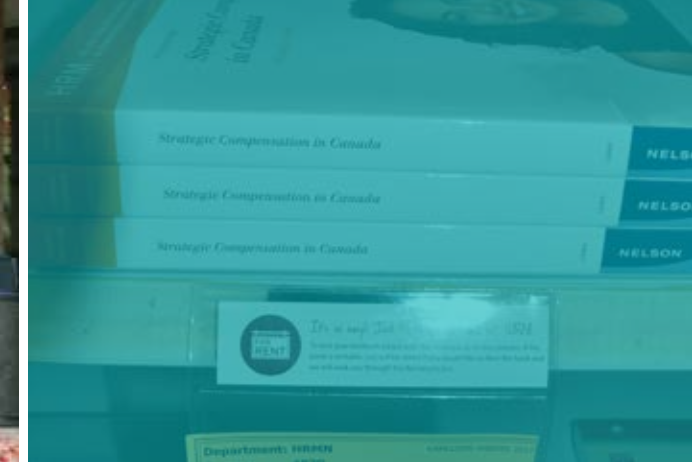


RESPONDING TO TRUSU'S BUDGET CONSULTATION REPORT

TRUSU's 2017/18 Budget Consultation Report made the following recommendations with respect to the TRU Bookstore:

- provide greater returns to students selling used textbooks and lower prices for students buying them
- establish a comprehensive system of textbooks on reserve in the Library with sufficient copies to meet demand
- provide incentives or supports for instructors to adopt textbooks from the BC Open Textbook program
- extend hours of operation in the Bookstore with the possibility of increased student employment or window service
- enhance the flexibility of the Bookstore return policy for textbooks and course material
- establish a fellowship for instructors to create open textbooks, in partnership with the BC Open Textbook program

To address students' concerns with the TRU Bookstore, the following actions will be taken in response to TRUSU's recommendations:



To provide greater returns to students selling used textbooks and lower prices for students buying them, the TRU Bookstore will:

- review current processes and the value of purchasing used textbooks
- more effectively communicate the textbook buyback process (SellBack) and its value to our students

Used textbooks have become a commodity, seeing a rise or fall in their value based on the demand in the marketplace. The frequently changing editions and manipulation of packaging by publisher lowers the value of used textbooks and makes it more difficult to buy back used texts.

In an effort to assist students with the rising costs of textbooks, the Bookstore became a member of the Canadian Campus Retail Association (CCRA) in the early 2000s, joining 24 other universities and colleges across the country. This association provides expanded opportunities for TRU students to sell their used textbooks to other CCRA institutions.

The Bookstore’s **SellBack** service offers three options for buying back textbooks, where most schools only have two options. Our students can sell textbooks back for resale by the Bookstore, by CCRA institutions, or by textbook wholesalers. If the books are being bought back by the CCRA or wholesalers, the value for the textbooks is set by them; the Bookstore provides the service, but does not set the price.

The Bookstore offers 50% of the new price for a used textbook for use at TRU for the upcoming semester regardless of whether the student purchased it new or used, and thereby assumes the risk that it may not sell the next semester. The Bookstore also guarantees the used book is the correct edition and in good condition, minimizing the risk to our students. The Bookstore offers a convenient and organized method for faculty to supply course material; however, control over which edition is required for a particular course is at the discretion of the faculty member, who determines what material is needed for that course.

Students see greater savings if a textbook is used for multiple semesters. Figure 1 shows the cost for a textbook bought new, bought back and resold by the Bookstore over two semesters. (The buyback value of the used textbook will drop significantly if it is being purchased for another CCRA member university or textbook wholesaler.)

Fig. 1: Used Textbook Value for TRU Bookstore Buyback

Use Over 2 Semesters	Textbook Cost	Buyback Value	Actual Cost to Student
Semester 1	New \$100	\$50	\$50
Semester 2	Used \$75	\$50	\$25



If a textbook has not been readopted for the upcoming semester, or the edition has changed, the Bookstore is unable to buy the book back for use at TRU, but there may be demand from other CCRA institutions or wholesalers. Demand decreases with every sale and can drop quickly as other students across Canada sell back their books. Students can check which textbooks are being bought back and at what price through the [SellBack website](#) using the online quote, sign up for email alerts or download the SellBack mobile app, or ask in person at the Bookstore's SellBack window.

Old edition texts or other books not eligible for buyback will be accepted for donation to [Better World Books](#) and [Textbooks for Change](#), charitable organizations supported by the Bookstore.

In addition to the SellBack service, over the last six years the Bookstore has offered e-books and a rental option for as many titles as possible, to help students save money.

- **Action Items:** Encourage faculty to use textbooks for longer periods of time.
- **Implementation Timeline:** September 2017.
- **Success Indicators:** A higher percentage of used textbooks sold at the Bookstore. Reduction in overall expense to students purchasing course material.

To establish a comprehensive system of textbooks on reserve in the Library with sufficient copies to meet demand, the TRU Bookstore will:

- provide information on current editions and titles being used in courses for each semester.

TRUSU's request to establish a comprehensive system of textbooks is a library matter, not in the purview of the TRU Bookstore.

- **Action Items:** N/A

To provide incentives or supports for instructors to adopt textbooks from the BC Open Textbook program, the TRU Bookstore will:

- continue to support faculty in textbook selection

When a faculty member chooses to use a BC Open Textbook, the Bookstore will support it in the same manner as other delivery methods. Open Textbooks will be noted on shelf tags, making the required material easy and convenient for students to access.

- **Action Items:** N/A
- **Success Indicators:** More BC Open Textbooks used for courses. Ongoing online customer satisfaction surveys, average spend/transactions, overall sales volumes.

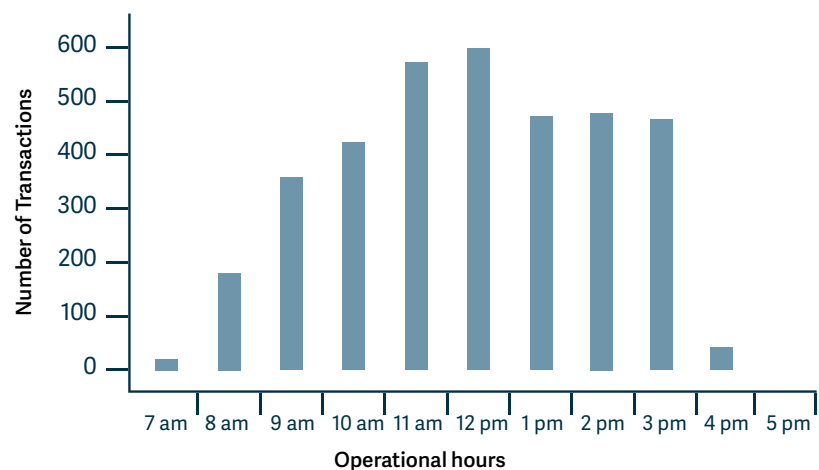


To extend hours of operation in the TRU Bookstore with the possibility of increased student employment or window service, the TRU Bookstore will:

- review hours of operation to ensure we are meeting the needs of our students
- explore the use of a specialized vending machine to deliver stationery items for students during non-business hours

The Bookstore has been a service leader on campus, extending hours during peak times. We continue to review our hours of operation to ensure they are meeting student's needs. The majority of the Bookstore transactions occur during the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. Current hours of operation were set based on transaction data, indicating a significant drop in traffic after 4 p.m., as shown in Figure 2.

Fig. 2: Average TRU Bookstore Transactions per Month



The majority of sales occur during the last two weeks of August, the first three weeks of September and the first three weeks of January.

During these peak times, the Bookstore attempts to hire as many students as possible to help with the increase in traffic. Controlling high labour costs during the non-peak times is crucial in reducing the price of goods sold at the Bookstore.

The Bookstore will work to identify non-textbook items that students require outside of operating hours, and look into the possibility of offering these items in a vending machine.

- **Action Items:** Review hours of operation during peak times. Examine which products are in demand during non-typical business hours to help determine the potential adjustment to the hours of operation.
- **Implementation Timeline:** September 2017.
- **Success Indicators:** Ongoing online customer satisfactions surveys, average spend/transactions, overall sales volumes.



To enhance the flexibility of the Bookstore’s return policy for textbooks and course material, the TRU Bookstore will:

- review the current textbook return policy and identify opportunities for improvement
- provide better communication on the current return policy

The current Bookstore [textbook return policy](#) gives students two weeks from the beginning of classes to return textbooks for a full refund, if accompanied by the appropriate paperwork and in pristine condition. After the second week of classes, refunds will only be considered in the event of a course cancellation or change. This gives students who drop a course the ability to return the material—as long it is in pristine condition with supporting course change documentation—outside the normal return period. Any reasonable explanation for a return will be considered.

The current return policy was developed because the longer grace period previously in place was being abused by students attempting to use the Bookstore as a library to obtain textbooks for short-term use.

- **Action Item:** Provide clearer instruction on the return policy at point of sale, Bookstore website, and video screens.
- **Implementation Timeline:** ongoing
- **Success Indicators:** Less confusion about the policy, overall customer satisfaction.

RE Fellowship for open textbook creation:

TRUSU’s request to establish a fellowship for instructors to create open textbooks in partnership with the BC Open Textbook program is an academic matter, not in the purview of the TRU Bookstore. This request is referred to the Provost’s Office.

The TRU Bookstore welcomes feedback on the services it provides at bookstore@tru.ca. We look forward to working with all members of our community to improve the overall campus retail experience.