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CAMPUS LIFE

Searching for the best textbook deals

Alexie Rothman

Princetonian Staff Writer

With one trip to the U-Store, one walk through the aisles and one swipe of his credit card, Alex Lenahan '07 purchased his books for this semester. A week later and \$400 poorer, Lenahan wishes he had searched elsewhere to find the books at a better price.

"I would have bought the books used," Lenahan said. "But the U-Store is so close and easy."

The location and flexible return policies make the U-Store a convenient option for students, said U-Store marketing director Virginia France.

According to the U-Store's policy, it will also "match any major U.S. retailer's price on books — local or national."

Philip Kidd '06 said he prefers to buy used textbooks at the U-Store. However, if they are out of stock he uses websites like Amazon.com to buy his books.

"The U-Store isn't more expensive, textbooks are just expensive in general," Kidd said. "It makes sense to get your books used if you can."

However, with a single textbook costing as much as \$170, many students prefer to shop online for cheaper copies.

Amazon.com is one of several large online booksellers. Two other sites, Abebooks.com and alibris.com, specialize in used books.

Bookfinder.com, which searches most major online booksellers for used and new texts, found copies of F. Scott Fitzgerald's '17 "This Side of Paradise" ranging from \$1 for a used copy to \$18,000 for a rare signed edition.

Leslie Hsu '07 used another online site, Half.com, to buy textbooks and saved over \$40 in the process.

Hsu spent about an hour online looking for her books. She then waited a week for the books to arrive on campus.

"The annoying part of buying books online isn't the online shopping, it's walking to Frist to pick them up," Kidd said.

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However, these inconveniences are minor to students who manage to save hundreds of dollars buying their books used.

But not all students are willing to buy used textbooks online.

Chris Chaney '07 doesn't trust online booksellers who can falsely advertise the condition of their books.

"Everybody wants to sell their books," Chaney said. " But a lot of times books listed as great condition really aren't."

Chaney will only buy new books online. His favorite site is Walmart.com, which he said saves him roughly five to 10 dollars per book.

Chaney was unaware of the U-Store's pledge to match any competitor's price. If he had known this, Chaney said, he would have bought his books at the U-Store.

Posters advertising this policy hang on the U-Store's walls, France said.

All students have to do is bring in the online price quote, including shipping and handling, and the U-store will match that price.

Charlie Harlich, the U-Store's textbook manager, said the U-Store is generally less expensive than amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. The U-Store purchases its books directly from the publishers, who set the book prices.

The U-store also offers its members a five percent discount on all textbooks.

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