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| S.W.A.T. - Secretly Watching All Textbooks |
| Textbook Price Aggregator |
| Saving Students Time and Money |
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| We would like to design a website that aggregates the price of textbooks from online retailers such as Half.com and Amazon.com. However we will allow users to input their course schedule and we will display the appropriate textbooks for their classes |

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# Executive Summary

Our product – a web-technology -- will search a number of websites for the inputted textbooks, and display a list that is sorted by price in hopes of providing easier access to the cheaper alternatives available.

Many college students spend hundreds of dollars each semester on textbooks due to their lack of knowledge of feasible alternatives to the campus bookstore which for many books charges significantly more, even for used books, than other online merchants charge. Currently existing products lack the ability to obtain book lists when given a list of classes, which will be a big selling point of our product. Simply having a choice on what price to pay and what quality book to purchase will make a big difference as most students are not aware of any alternatives.

Our product will enable students to spend the money saved from textbooks on other items they were forced to forgo due to the exorbitant price charged by the bookstore.

# Vision

Currently the only options students have for purchasing textbooks are paying excessive amounts at the bookstore, or spending large amounts of time searching online for a better price. We hope to have our product help save both time and money by automating the search process by aggregating prices from many online retailers and allowing users to input course schedules and by sorting the books by price to help get the best deal in as much time as it would take to go buy the book from the bookstore in person.

# Gap in market

Currently many students purchase their textbooks through the university, either online or at the bookstore. While readily available to all students, buying textbooks through the university is problematic due to high costs and the possibility of the needed book being out of stock. Our product addresses both of these issues: by aggregating many different websites it is unlikely a book will simply be unavailable and if the book is available for significantly less than through the university, that price will be found.

Also, few online retailers allow users to input their schedules to see the books they need. Our product will allow university students to do this, making it easier for students to find the books they need.

# Meeting market needs

Many students are strapped for time and money, so saving both time and money while purchasing textbooks, a necessary evil for obtaining a college education, would surely make a college student happy. By collecting textbook listings from many sites, our product provides a larger audience of sellers helping ensure we find the cheapest prices for any book.

# Implementation

Required market capitalization for the startup process is relatively low as a result of relying on open-source development tools for developing the web-based textbook aggregator system. Initial over-head will stem from server and bandwidth costs.

Financial gain can be pursued by marketing to companies that share a target consumer base and offering advertising space on our company website. Revenue can also be generated by an artificial inflation on the price of books (augmenting price by a couple of cents).

# The Problem

The main dilemmas with purchasing textbooks stems from a lack of technology that consolidates textbook prices from multiple retailers or merchants so that an end-user can efficiently compare the prices of products with the aim of saving money.

Selling books is also important; however, there is a lack of resources that provide an outlet for this to happen. Most currently, systems in place do not necessarily focus on a specific target consumer, a university student, and therefore may not provide the most advantageous options for conducting electronic sales in their interests.

Too, an effective way to market such a tool could be problematic as there may be little incentive for a retailer or merchant to have users avoid their technology offered via their website for product searches.

# Solution

The proposed solution seeks to aggregate the selling of textbooks with the aim of benefiting the retailer/seller, benefiting the end-user through efficiency gained through searches, saving time from price comparisons, and saving money by enabling the user to quickly identify the least costly option. Furthermore, the implementation of such a tool requires little overhead in terms of cost in implementation.

Moreover, monetization of the product could be achieved by artificially inflating the price by a nominal amount and purchasing directly through a retailer/seller. Too, offering advertising to companies that share the same target consumer can forge partnerships as a source of revenue.

# Industry Need for Technology

Cheap textbooks are usually always sought for by students and non-students alike. There is a niche for our product to fill based on a reliable demand by students of Universities; furthermore, the automation for web crawling retailer websites and University websites streamlines the process of finding the most advantageous deals or competitive prices for desired textbooks.

# Market Analysis

The chief competitor in this area of textbook aggregation is www.campusbooks.com;

In addition to consolidating textbook prices across websites that sell textbooks, it effectively allows for price comparisons; too, it provides for market creation by users to act as merchants and sell their textbooks. Also, the ability to narrowly focus on renting textbooks is available as well.

This market remains a stable, viable option for possible investors as the demand for textbooks will always be present as a result of universities.

# Primary Market

The focus audience is University students with the aim of saving them money; however, a partnership can be had for advertisers with similar target consumers to use our product as a vehicle with the aim of attracting possible users to their products.

# Market size

Our market applies to all college students in the United States. According to the Census Bureau, in 2009 there were over 16 million college students[[1]](#endnote-1) enrolled in universities around the country. Almost every one of these students is required to buy textbooks for the classes they are enrolled in. Our website will be available to any of these students that have an Internet connection.

# Competition

There are 3 classifications of competitors: core competency competitors, textbook competitors, and popular competitors.

## Core Competency Competitors

These competitors are companies that offer similar services that our website will offer; however none of these competitors combine the service of aggregating textbook prices and allowing users to input course schedules like our website will.

* + **Campusbooks.com**

Aggregates the prices of textbooks from other online retailers

* + **ChimesTextBookExchange.com**

Allows users to input courses and sells appropriate textbooks from their store

* + **CoopBookstore.com**

Allows users to input courses and sells appropriate textbooks from their store

## Textbook competitors

Revenue can be generated by inflating the price of textbooks when bought through our site. Therefore sites that sell textbooks such as the ones listed below become competitors.

* + **Chegg.com**

A textbook renting site

* + **Textbooks.com**

A site that sells and rents new and used textbooks and allows users to sell their own textbooks

* + **eCampus.com**

A site similar to Textbooks.com but allows users to also rent an eTextbook (electronic copy of a textbook).

## Popular Competitors

These competitors are online stores that do not specialize in textbook sales yet students often buy textbooks from these sites.

* + **Amazon.com**
  + **Half.com**
  + **Ebay.com**

# Marketing strategies

Our website plans to potentially generate revenue from advertising on our site, and/or by allowing users to buy textbooks directly from our website for a small fee. The incentive to buy textbooks from our website is that it is one easy, convenient location to compare prices on textbooks -- achieved by simply entering in your course schedule. Our website will expand by including more universities with this option of inputting course schedules.

# Developing strategy

An Agile Development Model will be employed for software design and engineering as the development team is small with three members. Additionally, emphasis will be placed on an iterative and incremental development process due to the theoretically small size of the software project.

# Barriers

Some of the barriers to entering into the textbook market will be:

* Marketing Costs
* Consumer Recognition
* Competition from established firms

1. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school/cps2009.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)