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BookCompare: Executive Summary

- BookCompare is a tool for getting the best deals on books you need, and for reselling your own books. At its core, the app is a scanner. When you scan a barcode—say, on the back of a book in a major chain bookstore, where you’re unsure if the prices are good—the app fetches info about the book from the OpenLibrary API and then displays a table of prices from across the web, bookstores, and other app users (unfortunately price data is currently all dummy, randomized to feel somewhat realistic). You can also enter an ISBN manually rather than scanning. The other side of the app’s functionality, as mentioned, is posting your own books for sale—this is done by filling out and submitted a form (with the resulting entry currently saved to UserDefaults).
- Instructions for use: Launch the app, and wait for it to “load.” Find some books around your house, or in a bookstore or library. Hold up their barcodes in front of the camera, and the app will automatically scan them and bring you to a detail page where you can see different sellers’ prices and locations. Clicking on one of the sellers will take you to the mail app to send them an email expressing interest. If you’d like to revisit some of the listings you previously saw, click the book icon in the navigation bar and select whatever row of the modal popup table that you’d like. If you’re looking to sell a book, click the plus button in the navigation bar, and fill out the form with the correct ISBN of your book (verified with live feedback to help you avoid making mistakes) and a valid number for the price. Submit, and you should be able to see your own listing when you open the price detail page for that book again (e.g. by scanning it).
- Market niche: As far as I’m aware, no app does exactly this. Amazon has a built-in scanner, but it’s a minor feature of their massive app, and (not surprisingly) only shows Amazon’s own prices. There are online resources that do a really good job collecting online book prices, like BookFinder.com, but they have no apps—they don’t integrate closely with mobile hardware like we’re trying to do. The goal with putting scanning front and center is to offer a seamless, almost thoughtless experience for finding the best price on books—you don’t even need to type in the title of the book you see in the store, you just need to pick it up. The Craigslist-style marketplace angle is also a unique twist, which some websites already do for books, but not in this stripped back way.
- Future goals: Getting real data for the book prices is essential, but proved to be tricky! There doesn’t seem to be any miraculous free, universal book price API, so I’d have to resort to meticulous webscraping from a site like BookFinder.com (if that’s legal), or individual API access/webscraping from a maintained list of sites. Another thing that would improve the app is a better search experience—instead of just being able to search by ISBN, it would be great to be able to fuzzy search by title or other keywords. This was also difficult to implement, as that kind of searching wasn’t readily available to me through the API I was using. Speaking of which, kudos to OpenLibrary for their extensive and free API. Also my history table is a modal view and is a little tricky to swipe out of (I made it a tableviewcontroller, so I couldn’t put a title or X button at the top without some tricky work).

Marketing Materials

Category: Books (duh!)

Description: Shopping for books, but want to make sure you're getting the best deal? Use BookCompare to scan book barcodes, and instantly see what price other stores and individuals in your area are selling that book for.

Looking to sell your own books? BookCompare supports posting your own listings, so that you can resell to other eager readers. Try it out now!

Keywords:

book,amazon,school,kindle,reader,paper,scan,barcode,sell,market,store,craigslist,trade,goodreads

Screenshots:



