

Team CSJ

Elevator Pitch

Textbook costs impose many burdens on college students. The average college student expends between \$628 and \$1,471 annually on textbooks and other supplies ([Education Data Initiative, 2022](#)). Specifically, GW students are expected to spend around \$1,400 annually on books and supplies. According to a survey of more than 5,000 students from over 150 campuses that were taken in 2020, 65% of students reported not purchasing textbooks because of their high costs ([VCU Libraries Research Guides](#)). Our project BookCycle is a web application intended for college students at the George Washington University who spend hundreds of dollars each semester on textbooks, only to never use them again in a few months once they are enrolled in new classes that require different textbooks. The truth is that if college students cannot gain access to the necessary and required textbooks, their academic success will take a hit, affecting their future. It is no secret that textbooks are expensive, but buying new or renting can have a financial strain on college students who have many other costs to account for as well. As demand increases for cost-effective solutions, students are faced with the difficult task of finding textbooks for cheaper or buying new textbooks, putting them under further financial strain as college students. Buying textbooks also harms the environment as they are only used for about 4 months a year and are often forgotten relics that students use to prop up their belongings in their college dorms.

BookCycle is unique in its design for many reasons. Users are only allowed to sign up to use the web application if they have a George Washington email account, which then has to be verified to establish a secure and trustworthy network of users only within our community. Once a student signs up with a verified email that is authenticated, they will then be asked what textbooks they are in need of and if they have any that they would be willing to enter into the system. Our matching algorithm will provide them with a feed of textbooks that matches their needs. Lastly, once they put in a request for the textbook, the book lister will fill out a form about the buildings and times they are available to make the exchange with the user. The user, after selecting and agreeing to a building and time slot, will then meet at the agreed time and place to receive the textbook. With this, all exchanges are done within our campus giving an added layer of safety, as well as avoiding the additional cost of shipping. Their textbook feed will be

specifically curated to their needs based on what classes they are taking, but also pushing the idea to re-enter the textbooks they got from another user back into the system when the semester is over for someone else to be able to use them the same way they did.

Community-based textbook sharing is what makes us different from our competitors. Websites such as Facebook Marketplace, CraigsList, and BookMooch, all charge their users to buy or rent their textbooks, in addition to paying a shipping fee. BookCycle has no shipping, no warehouse, no middleman, and no cost. All book swapping is done within a trusted zone on campus where both parties agree to meet at the same building and time on the George Washington campus to exchange the textbook. People value a product that comes from a member of their community and within a safe zone that they are already familiar with. The key differentiating factor of our product is that all of the users are students who do not wish that a lack of access to textbooks will negatively affect their education and academic success, and have the ability to operate in a safe area with one another while positively affecting their education, financial spending, and environmental impacts. Our system allows users to make these exchanges with other students who wish to pay it forward by putting up books they no longer have any use for into the system to make an impact and difference in our community.

The beauty of BookCycle is that it is designed to foster the growth of an ecosystem. Users can only “check out” 5 textbooks per semester which will encourage them to either donate more books they no longer have use for or return the ones they have used during the semester back cycling into the system. We want to establish a network where the users will feel inspired to “pay it forward” to other students to further their academic success without inflicting further financial strain on top of already costly tuition. We want to encourage our users to recycle these textbooks back into the system and create a cycle that will close off that academic performance gap being negatively impacted by students who cannot afford to rent or buy textbooks each semester to use this platform to make a difference in our community.