

# Cashing in on money well spent:

BY CASSIE SHANER  
The Dominion Post

WVU students have more options than ever before to buy and sell textbooks as the university's fall semester comes to a close.

A new downtown bookstore and a Web site launched earlier this month are designed to help students earn more money for their old textbooks and save money when they buy new or used ones.

Bookholders.com -- also the name of the store's Web site -- is on University Avenue.

Manager Louis Verde said the store puts more money in students' pockets by offering multiple options for book buyback and selling new and used textbooks at lower prices than other bookstores.

Bookholders.com's Cash Now program is similar to traditional buyback programs, which allow students to exchange their textbooks for cash. Verde said students who opt for cash on the spot typically earn about 50 percent of the book's value.

And each book's cash value is based on national demand, rather than local demand, which allows Bookholders.com to buy books that are no longer in use at WVU and may not be purchased at other local bookstores. The store then sells the books to students at other schools where they might still be in use.

Bookholders.com opened its first store in Maryland in 1999. The company now operates five stores in three states that serve WVU, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Tech, Towson University and the University of Maryland, as well as other smaller schools.

Steve Kite, an associate professor of geology and geography at WVU, served on a statewide task force on textbook affordability. He said students will profit if Bookholders.com can find a place for books that are no longer used at WVU.

"Competition is good," Kite said. "It sounds like they may have some innovative ways to find a market for books the bookstores here haven't been able to."

Verde said students who are willing to wait can earn even more money through the store's Advantage program.

"It's a consignment-based model," Verde said. "We take the book from the student and sell it for them. They get money when it sells."

Bookholders.com takes a 15 percent commission, and students who opt for the Advantage program get a check for the rest of the profit from the book's sale. They can even set the price of the book and manage their account online.

Ryan Quinn, a member of WVU's student Board of Governors, said the additional competition may help drive down textbook prices at other local stores, but he doubted students would want to wait to get money for their books.

"It seems like a lot of students are going to want cash in hand," said Quinn, whose goal as a board member is to educate students about textbook prices and alternatives. "It's good that they're providing the service. ... I just think a lot of people are going to be looking for a quicker sale."

Quinn said students make the most money when they sell their books themselves. [CollegeBook Evolution.com](http://CollegeBookEvolution.com) allows them to do just that.

The Web site, which launched Dec. 4, connects WVU students who want to buy and sell books. It was created by Devin Labadini, a WVU senior majoring in finance, who got the idea after he bought a used book from a friend on campus.

"The key focus is to use what you have to get what you need," Labadini said. "If you're buying books, you're going to save money. If you're selling books, you're going to make more money compared to the bookstore."

Students can sell or trade their books for whatever they want, but they're prohibited from setting the price too high. And the site automatically identifies matches, notifying sellers by e-mail when someone is interested in their book.

Labadini declined to say exactly how many students have signed up so far, but he said it's "not many." The site will be more useful and effective as more students sign up, he said.

"It's kind of a student body thing," Labadini said. "You have to get a thousand or more people for it to work really well."

It costs \$19.99 to sign up for a year, but students who sign up before the semester ends can do so for \$9.99 using a coupon code available on the site's Facebook [fan page](#). Quinn said he wishes there was no subscription fee, but it's good that the site is restricted to WVU students.

"Isolating that circle makes it a lot more secure and makes people feel more comfortable," Quinn said.

Labadini said the subscription fees help cover the cost of setting up the business. It took him five months to develop, and he said he spent several thousand dollars on licensing, Web design and other fees.

Labadini plans to enter the site in WVU's statewide collegiate business plan competition next year. The contest allows students to submit business ideas to professors and business professionals for a chance to win \$10,000.