



# Helping JMU Students Quicky Find Affordable Books

User Research Assignment  
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SMAD 203  
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# How Might we improve the Experience if JMU Students Trying to Find Affordable Books?

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the most important feature that factors into your decision when buying books?
2. Where do you normally obtain your books from?
3. When ordering a book, what kind of buying options are important to you? (rent, buy, e-book, etc.) Is the quality of the book important?
4. Why do you browse the internet for cheap books rather than getting books on campus at the bookstore?
5. What issues do you commonly come across when searching for affordable books?
6. What will you do with the books after usage?
7. Can you show me the process of finding books online/in-store? Explain your personal experience when buying books.

## Rationale for Approach

When thinking about how to address the design question, I imagined how to get the information to create a useful and working product. By being a member of the user base, I am designing for, allows me to have a better understanding of my peers. I am a rising Junior with tons of experience of looking for cheap books. Although it has been two years, I still find myself searching for hours on end for cheap books. Towards the beginning of each semester, my roommates and I constantly would arrive at the topic of struggles involving buying books. During our discussions, I realized a bunch of issues they were experiencing I was as well. From these interactions, I hypothesized that common difficulties in finding affordable books are similar between individuals in different majors therefore when looking for books JMU students have similar needs.

I choose to conduct one on one interviews; however, due to COVID-19, I was not able to meet in person for most of my interviews. Instead, I conducted FaceTime interview calls between myself and whom I was interviewing. One on one interviews were chosen because it is the best way to observe individuals and to obtain the maximum amount of information. When interviewees would answer questions, I tended to add some follow up questions to ensure the interviewee's response was complete. Often, interviewees would elaborate on their response or add something they had forgotten; a survey would not gauge this kind of extended response. A survey creates extreme distance between the producer and the consumer, which makes them less likely to provide elaborate answers.

Asked more open-ended questions. By asking the interviewees to show me the process of finding books online/in-store/etc. I was trying to gauge the frustrations of the experience that was the most intolerable for them. The result brought me to a realization about buying books that I would not have known was important or necessary.

I interviewed 7 people because the more people I interviewed the better answers I would receive. After adding the extra 2 interviews, I began to hear similar answers in each individual's response and concluded there was an existing pattern.

Due to the extensive amount of information from the interviews, I was able to analyze the data and split into user personas to compare different difficulties and behavior in regards to searching for affordable books. In doing so another feature was discovered (JMU bookstore price comparison to other websites).

# Selecting Students to Interview

The primary intention of the app is to help students find affordable books faster for JMU. It was important to narrow down “student” into different categories of students that would use the app. Major has a massive influence on the target audience of this app. It made sense to find students of different majors because each has its own set of books. There are some students in business, others in computer science, and SMAD. By having a huge range of majors, I will be able to see if a different perspective from individuals in various fields. Another important aspect is the price. Price influences the target audience of this app. Not many college students like to spend hundreds of dollars on books. Being able to see the various prices of books from different sites in one place will stop the constant internet surfing for books. In selecting students to interview, 7 different students were approached and interviewed.

2	2	1	2
SMAD	Business	Computher Science	Health Science

I also included each gender perspective. I made sure when selecting interviewees that I received both male and female responses. From this selection, it gives me a better view from all perspectives and allows for an overall view of student’s feedback.



# Interview Process

## Most Important Feature

Price						
Condition						
Essential to class						

Why they chose to Browse the Internet instead of going to the Bookstore

### Cheaper/Save money


### Delivered right to me

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## Perfered Place to Buy Books

JMU Bookstore					
Chegg					
Amazon					
Illegally Downloaded					
Other					
<small>*includes Barnes &amp; Noble, send gage unlimited, knetbooks.com</small>					

“If a book is not on Chegg or Amazon I don’t know what to do at that point.”

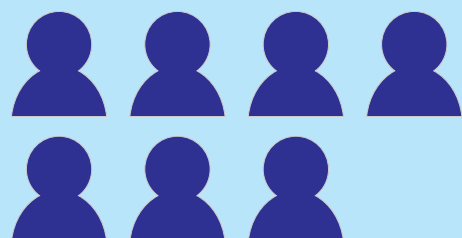




# Interview Process

## Most Important Buying Options

### Rent Hardcopy



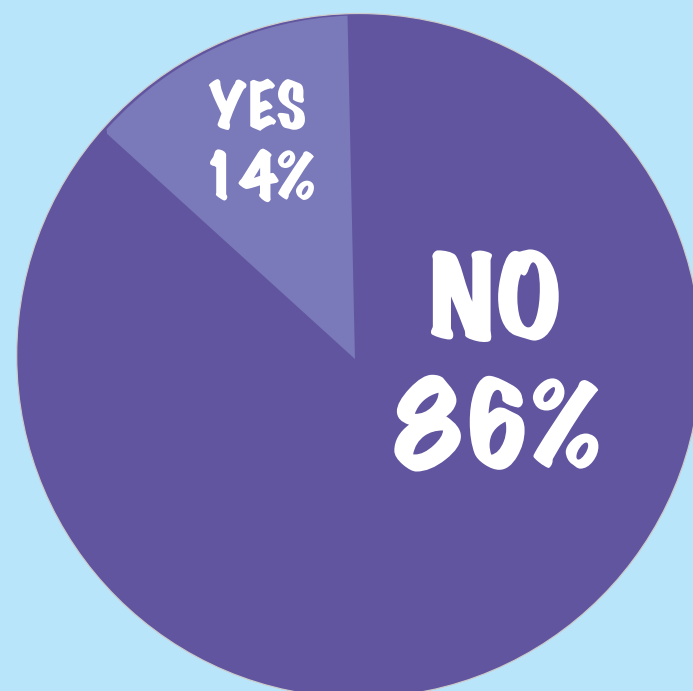
### Buy Hardcopy



### Online Book



## Is Quality Important?



## Notes and Quotes

"over \$50 rent, under \$50 buy."

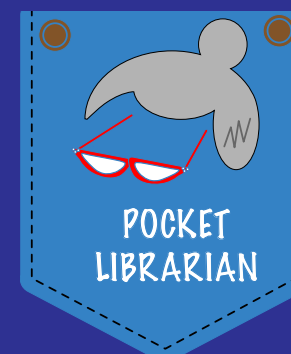
"A book is a book, condition does not matter."

"Literally could be destroyed I don't care of quality."

"NEVER want to buy a book."

**Rent:** Cheaper usually, returnable

**Hardcopy:** Easier to highlight, notes in book, doesn't hurt eyes



# Interview Process

## Issues when searching for books...

### Visit multiple sites



### Out of stock



### Wrong Edition



### No rent option



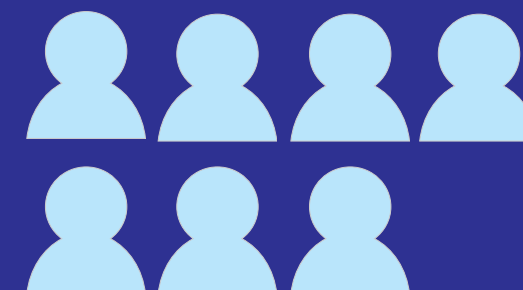
### Unreliable website



## Where Books go after usage

### Rented...

#### Return to seller



### Bought...

#### Sell to:

##### JMU Book Exchange



##### Sorority/Friends



##### Books-A-Million



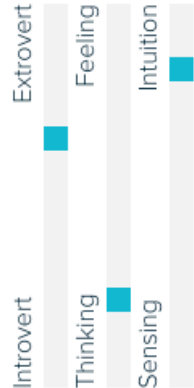
# REILLY O'CONNOR



"Professors require overpriced textbooks we need maybe once a year. We pay tuition, have google, and other resources for free. Why not Education?"

Age: 20  
Work: Business Student  
Family: Live out of state in NJ  
Location: Harrisonburg, VA  
Character: Junior at JMU

## Personality



Intelligent

Overworked

Outgoing

## Frustrations

- Having to visit multiple sites to find the best price.
- The book you need is not always in stock.
- The edition is not obvious when looking for a book; tends to buy the wrong one.
- Books at the bookstore are overpriced, forcing me to look elsewhere for cheaper options.

## Goals

- Able to find books fast without having to visit multiple sites to compare prices.
- Find cheap prices or deals on books.
- To not feel stressed while going through the process of finding books.

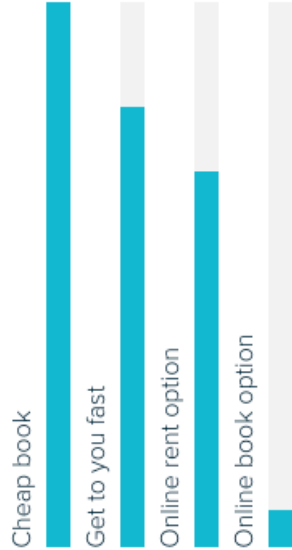
## Bio

Reilly is a Junior at JMU majoring in Business Marketing with a minor in SCOM. He likes to spend time with his friends and is a hardworking Dean's List member. Outside of JMU, he works for DoorDash to make money for groceries and college living. Being a Junior, Reilly has had many unpleasant experiences from buying books. Too many times has he bought a book at the bookstore and later found it cheaper on Amazon or Chegg. He hates to visit multiple sites. He is a renter, who will return the book later therefore the site needs to be reliable. Reilly needs a book that can be found fast and is affordable that he can rent with little to no hassle for his busy schedule.

## Preferred Channels



## Needs



## Behavior Toward Technology

- Uses technology every day for class and work.
- Normally tech-savvy and knows his way around a computer.
- Roommates go to him for tech. support/help.
- Thinks outside the box before asking for help.

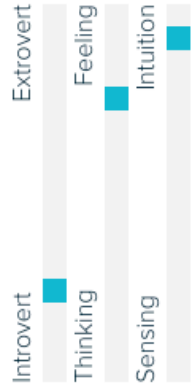
# SAM SUMMIT



"Bad experience with Chegg. I don't recall signing up for a subscription, but my bank account sure did"

Age: 21  
Work: Health Science Student  
Family: Live out of state in TN  
Location: Harrisonburg, VA  
Character: Senior at JMU

## Personality



Intelligent

Overworked

Outgoing

## Frustrations

- Prices are too high for the college budget; looking for the lowest price.
- Been scammed out of money from unreliable book websites before; need to trust the source.
- Staring at the screen for too long irritates her eyes.
- When you buy a slightly used book and it is destroyed by the time it arrives at your steps.

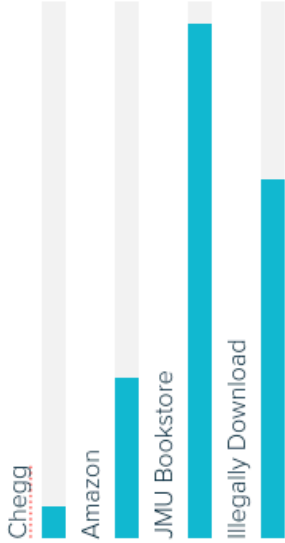
## Goals

- Able to find books fast and having a website you can trust to buy books from.
- Find cheap prices or deals on books you can buy.
- Find a way to have all this data on price, quality, and shipping speed all in front of you at once to save time.

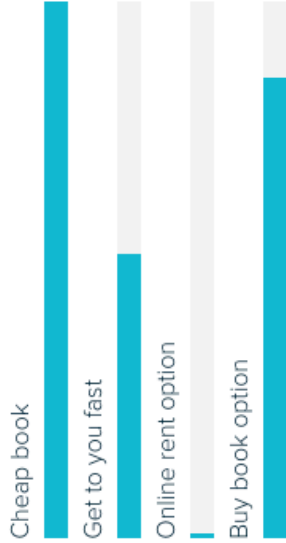
## Bio

Sam is a Senior at JMU majoring in Health Science with a minor in Biology. She likes to spend her free time working out and is a member of the Delta Gamma Chapter on campus. Outside of JMU, she has a dog named Pearl who is 3 years old. Sam has been working on campus in the new Atlantic Union Bank Center starting this year, but previously worked in the Convention Center. Being a Senior, Sam has been scammed out of money by sketchy websites too many times. Normally she sticks to the JMU Bookstore, but being a senior she is nervous about the prices. Sam needs somewhere reliable she can get a cheap book in-person that is in good condition to sell later after use.

## Preferred Channels



## Needs



## Behavior Toward Technology

- Would rather spend the day off of technology
- Tends to stay on a website no longer than 20 minutes if she cannot find her needs.
- Uses the phone everyday but the computer is another language to her.

