The Future of Digital Textbooks in Higher Education

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It was predicted that by 2016, digital textbook sales in the United States would surpass 25% of the combined new textbook sales for the Higher Education and Career Education markets (Reynolds, 2011). And the study predicts by 2018 that digital format will be the dominant form factor in Higher Education textbooks. Growth has allowed new content publishers to break into the publishing market and some have brought new models of digital products. Opportunities for educational institutions to cut costs are available by fundamental shifts in purchasing of learning materials.

One business model holds the niche market of a virtual campus retailer, demonstrated by the success story of eCampus.com for the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) (Rosen, 2015). They created an online store and staffed a kiosk on campus for students to pick up books and other materials. It works like similar programs that Amazon has begun rolling out on other campuses, including Purdue and UMass Amherst. It is reported that in addition to the UWM partnership, eCampus.com has a staffed kiosk at National Louis University and unstaffed kiosks at 20 other colleges. It also operates 150 virtual school stores, and it sells digital textbooks directly to students; it also sells and rents physical textbooks. Altogether, the privately held company generates close to $100 million in revenue, according to president and CEO Matt Montgomery (Rosen, 2015).

One example of such innovation explores the rise in open learning for Business School Education. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)’s are being used as a strategic tool to explore alternative models of course delivery (Fitzgerald, Anderson, & Thompson, 2015). Northampton Business School at the University of Northampton identified a financially viable opportunity and the result was the Gateway MBA. It is a free, open MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) conversion of the introductory module of the MBA Program, to develop recruitment to the MBA internationally and to raise the profile of the university (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

**Thesis Peer Review**

This thesis paper was reviewed by a peer. The review was acknowledged with the following comment: Wenona Fetick who says, “Online course material, such as eBooks, in lieu of purchased textbooks, would save money for the school and the students.”

# References

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