



teaching learning committee
Montana State University Bozeman

Tips and Techniques For Finding and Selecting Textbooks

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The process of researching textbooks for the purpose of selecting appropriate course materials has come a long way in the last ten years, enabled as we have become by the Internet. New tools are now available that consolidate and refine the process. No longer are faculty tied to the formerly traditional methods of word-of-mouth, publisher representative dependent, or colleague based information streams.

Certainly, those avenues of information have not gone away, but they have been greatly enhanced by the advent of new cooperative efforts to amass these various methods into one process. Two examples of online resources are listed below, both of which are compendiums dedicated to streamlining the search for the perfect textbook.

Faculty Center Network - www.facultycenter.net

Of the two, the Faculty Center Network site, created by **MBS Textbook Exchange, Inc.**, is the most useful to all MSU faculty members. A one-stop resource for college textbooks, it is intended for faculty to use as a research tool and to assist them in making informed adoption decisions. When users connect to the Faculty Center Network, they have access to a robust bibliographic database of over 225,000 titles.

A user name and password is required to access the Faculty Center Network's database and tools. Access to the site is provided via the above link and is made possible by MSU Bookstore, Inc. The Bookstore is issued a generic user name and password, and then contacts faculty by way of a mailer, which provides them with access instructions. Faculty can also contact David Knickerbocker directly at dknick@montana.edu to request the temporary password. Once inside the site, users have the ability to register and create a unique user name and password for future access.

Researching textbooks

Users can browse by subject or locate books through an Advanced Search feature by author last name (any author listed for the textbook), title keyword, ISBN, or general keyword. Along with these search options, there is a database of publisher contact information, a "What's New" area for industry news and a list of new titles pending release, searchable by title.

Once users locate a textbook, they can:

- Sort all titles in the database by any author listed with the textbook
- Review the author(s) biography(ies)
- Link to the previous edition or next edition of the textbook
- Link to the publisher for more information about the textbook

- Review bibliographic information such as the Summary, Table of Contents, Sample Chapter, or Preface
- Link to the publisher for faculty supplement information
- Link to supplements produced by the publisher to accompany the textbooks
- Read reviews of the textbook
- Obtain desk copy request information

Adoption Information

In addition to the bibliographic information, users can review the title's subject ranking and adoption information.

A title's subject ranking indicates its level of demand within a specific subject area according to MBS Textbook Exchange, Inc.'s, order history indicating the book's popularity within its assigned subject area. (Titles are assigned to the unique subject taxonomy created by MBS Textbook Exchange, Inc.)

In addition, the adoption data indicates where and how often the textbook is used in the United States, and users can view a list of schools that have adopted a particular textbook.

FCNotebook

Perhaps the most useful tool within the Faculty Center Network is the FCNotebook. It allows users to keep a separate list of titles that they are interested in so they do not have to search for those titles every time they visit the Faculty Center Network.

From the FCNotebook, users also can create an adoptions list to give to their departmental textbook coordinator or bring to MSU Bookstore for ordering purposes. Users simply create their adoptions list, and then they fill in name, campus address, department, phone number, e-mail address and term. Finally, on a title-by-title basis, users can enter a course, section, quantity and statement of use information.

Users can also create an organized list of titles for requesting desk copies. (Faculty should contact the publishers directly in order to receive a desk copy for a title.)

Within the FCNotebook faculty can:

- Search or browse the database of over 225,000 titles
- Research and review textbooks for adoption consideration
- Obtain publisher contact information
- See how popular a title is and where it's used
- Generate an Adoptions list to return to the Bookstore
- Locate desk copy request information by title

TWM Research - www.newtextlistings.com

Each semester, MSU Bookstore, Inc. participates in a study to track curriculum changes at over 250 engineering schools. This enables our campus, by way of this participation, to access the information obtained in the study. This service allows faculty to find out about new publications earlier in the semester – thus reducing delays, last-minute changes and errors in their textbook adoption orders to the Bookstore.

Though not helpful for all disciplines at MSU, this service is currently available for departments of engineering, technology, computer science, math, physics and statistics.

Here are a few other things you should know about this Web site:

- It is designed to improve the flow of information between publishers and faculty at over 250 universities in the US and Canada.
- It allows instructors to look up the course(s) they are scheduled to teach to see what recent publications (including new editions) MIGHT be appropriate for that course.
- It focuses exclusively on new titles and editions.
- It provides a direct link to the publisher's Web page for each title.
- It is updated at the beginning of each Fall and Spring semester.
- It is NOT a listing of what books are in use at each school.
- It is NOT an online bookstore - instructors should contact the publisher to order an examination copy and adoption orders should be placed with the Bookstore.

Summary

Certainly, the poor timing of a new edition, or the non-availability of a classic, can have a negative affect on the decision of what to book to use, but normally it must be based on the needs and pedagogical concerns of the instructor. Ultimately, that decision is a personal one, but the use of the above Web sites can greatly aid users in their decision making process.

While choosing a textbook is by no means an easy process, it is hoped these two valuable resources can make the effort somewhat less daunting.