

Going Digital: The Future of College Textbooks?



This is the VOA Special English Education Report.

The average college student in America spent an estimated seven dollars on textbooks last year. The National Association of College Stores reported more than five billion dollars in sales of textbooks and course materials.

Association spokesman Charles Schmidt says electronic textbooks now represent just two to three percent of But he says that is expected to reach ten to fifteen percent by two thousand twelve.

Online versions are now available for many of the most popular college textbooks. E-textbooks can cost half the of a new print textbook. But students usually lose access after the end of the term. And the books cannot be placed on more than one device, so they are not to share.

So what do students think of e-textbooks? Administrators at Northwest Missouri State University wanted to find out. Earlier this year they tested them with five hundred students in twenty

The university is unusual. It not only provides laptop computers to all seven thousand of its full-time It does not require students to buy their textbooks either. They rent them to save The school aims to save even more by moving to e-textbooks.

The students in the survey reported that downloading the books from the Internet was easy. They liked the idea of carrying lighter And fifty-six percent said they were better able to find information.

But most found that using e-textbooks did not their study habits. And sixty percent felt they read more when they were reading on paper. In all, almost half the students said they still liked physical textbooks

But the survey found that cost could be a big influence. Fifty-five percent said they would choose e-textbooks if using them meant their textbook fee would not increase.

Roger Von Holzen heads the Center for Information Technology in Education at Northwest Missouri State. He tells us that administrators are disappointed with the e-textbooks now available because the majority are not

He thinks growth will come when more digital books include video, activities, and other ways to interact with the information. The technology is improving. But for now, most of the books are just words on a

And that's the VOA Special English Education Report, written by Nancy Steinbach. What do you think of e-textbooks? Share your thoughts at voaspecialenglish.com, where you can also find our reports. I'm Steve Ember.

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