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Bookstore and the Academic Community

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The Bookstore and the Academic Community

The college bookstore is an important adjunct of the academic, scholarly, and social life of the campus, because it serves to supply the personal and book needs of the student. It is a center where current publishing is brought on campus, where students and professors may browse among the best of books where interest in good books is nurtured, and where a personal and permanent library may be fortified.

The primary function of the college bookstore is the operation of the textbook department, which is a unique business. In no other business enterprise does a third party tell the management what to stock and the customer what to buy. This means that the bookstore is primarily a service enterprise. Christian stewardship requires that management does a complete and efficient job of merchandising these textbooks.

Textbooks depreciate in value rapidly as a result of new editions and changes in course requirements. Heavy transportation costs, due to the bulk and weight of the product are an important cost factor. No other line of college store merchandise requires as much work as textbooks. Obtaining the required information from professors, organizing and writing the orders, receiving, checking, and shelving textbooks is complicated by an occasional rush in reordering for unexpected class size and by returning unused texts.

Many students, faculty members, and administrators have a tendency to over-emphasize the cost of books and supplies required for purchase by a college student.

Contrary to opinion, college textbook costs are well below standard U.S. inflationary figures. As a matter of fact, college textbook cost increases are well below cost increases for elementary or secondary school textbooks. Since 1954 elementary school textbook prices have risen 87.3% and high school textbook prices have risen 91.9%, while college textbook costs have increased 40.9%. The cost of textbooks is less than five percent of the total expenditure necessary to attend college for one year.

Although the primary function of the college store is to provide necessary textbooks and supplies, bare necessity is no longer enough. Many students look for books to supplement their texts. They want something that either simplifies classroom work or gives additional information. They realize that textbook authors probably are discussing the subject one-sidedly, and they seek authors who take a different point of view. A good college bookstore should meet these needs.

But there are other equally important reading needs to be met on campus. Students want books for pleasure as well as for enlightenment. They read to escape the routine of their studies. Books to meet these needs fall into two classes. First, there are books of general cultural interest which will enrich the student's life, not only while on campus, but also after he graduates. These are the classics, time tried titles that have influenced readers for many years. Second, there are the new publications in paperback, often referred

to as mass market paperbacks.

The mass market publishing industry has become an integral part of reading America. It has become part of the educational growth of students and the personal growth and pleasure of all readers. Mass market paperbacks provide an extremely large number of titles from which to select, and new titles are released every month. This helps to keep inventory in this department always new, always up to date, always changing and always exciting. Titles which are released and turn out to be best sellers on campuses of state universities are often inappropriate, however, for a Christian college campus. Special attention is therefore required in the paperback department. Alexander Pope's advice is still appropriate: "Be not the first by whom the New are try'd, / nor yet the last to lay the Old aside."

Where a college has strong religious ties, it is imperative that the bookstore have a well-stocked, up-to-date and vital "Religious Book" section. Things are happening in the world, in the Church, and

in the lives of Christians that call for more reading in this area. People are receptive to reading books which probe the questions which seem unanswerable, and some large publishing companies are getting into publishing Christian books. A College bookstore must supply such books which will help people become more effective witnesses, and books that will assist readers to come to a better understanding of the Bible and God's world.)

No store can possibly cope with the proliferation of new titles. In order to serve every customer, therefore, a bookstore must also provide a special order service. A special order service is a goodwill builder, but not profitable. The cost of writing the order, processing the invoice, and shipping—all these normally consumed whatever discount the publisher allows. This service is the final factor in making a college bookstore what it should be, the book center of the community.

by Marv De Young

Towards Social Stewardship

"Why do we not see a unified body of Christ rising against the obvious secularization which is the spirit moving across the face of our land?"

These are the words of attorney Rex Downie, Jr., of Beaver Falls, Penn. Downie, along with Dr. James Skillen, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Gordon College in Wenham, Mass., lectured on a Christian response to justice and political reform. These men were the latest guest speakers in Dordt's Bicentennial Lecture Series.

Downie is presently engaged in a court case involving the allocation of public funds to all schools. He is working for equal distribution of monies for each student, regardless of whether that student attends a public or non-public school. "Secular

humanism has been defined by the U.S. Supreme Court as a religion," said Downie, stating the impetus for his action, "and it is a violation of my clients' constitutional rights" to be compelled to support "an established secular religion in the public schools which is in direct conflict with their own."

Dr. Skillen stated that in the present system our beliefs have "nothing to do with our defining of justice." In a lecture dealing with electoral reform Skillen termed the existing lawmaking framework as "useless, worthless nonsense," claiming that Congress acts solely as a "broker for competing interests." He went on to say that the system "assumes that all men adhere to the same public profession of faith which proclaims all men to be rational individuals."