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Textbook shortages expected

By Shelley Peterson

"Our goal is not to ever run out so we don't have to reorder."

Despite his optimistic goal, John Wehr, manager of the Nebraska Bookstore, said he expects many textbook shortages during the spring semester.

Shortages will be most prevalent in senior and graduate level courses. There will be few problems in undergraduate texts, but some biology and business management texts will be in short supply, Wehr said.

Bookstore managers said these textbook shortages can be attributed to a number of

Late orders, blizzard cause delay

Larry Behrends, manager of the University Bookstore, said late book orders from instructors will cause some delay, as will late freight shipments because of Friday's blizzard.

"There has been some problem with the information-gathering system, but it is being worked out," Wehr said.

The final pricing and shelving of textbooks was finished Saturday, and despite shortages of some books, Wehr said he expects more used books than ever before to be available when classes start.

The heaviest concentration of textbook sales is always during the first days of classes but many students opt to buy books ahead of time, according to Behrends.

"I think there are more students beginning to shop ahead of the rush," Behrends said, "and in most cases there is no problem."

Prices don't vary much

The students who have completed their textbook shopping early have probably found that prices do not vary much between the three major textbook dealers, Nebraska Bookstore, Campus Bookstore and the Unviersity Bookstore.

"As far as pricing is concerned we do not set the prices. It's all done by the publisher," Behrends said.

Even pricing of used books is standardized between the three stores, their managers said.

Wehr explained that, "All used book prices are automatically set at 25% off the new book price. On a rare occasion if a book is in terrible condition, the price may be set at 50% off."

"All the bookstores are using the same new book prices so they tend to end up the same," Wehr said.

Prices may rise

But a bookstore already may have some new books on hand from earlier orders and prices may have risen since the last shipment. This may cause some differences in new book prices when they are stacked to be sold, Wehr said.

Because pricing policies are slower in the book industry than in a commodity industry, such as sugar, Wehr said price increases caused by the paper shortage of last year are only now beginning to show up on new book prices.

"The average student can probably get by on \$70 a year for books," Wehr said.

But he said some students may pay more or less depending on their class schedules.

Wehr said law students may pay at least \$200 which does not include the many reference books they also need.

Wehr said some students may save on second semester books if a professor decides to keep using the same text for two semesters.

Reorder or borrow

If a bookstore does run out of any textbooks, students will either have to wait for a reorder or borrow a book from another student.

"If we run out we'll make every effort to special order a book," Behrends said.

Some reorders come through very quickly and Wehr cited an example of a shipment from New York that arrived in two days.

He said reorders are often the most expensive part of the textbook business because during the time between the order and the arrival of the shipment, many students are able to find the books or other alternatives leaving many books unsold.

"What really hurts is when faculty estimates are grotesquely off," Wehr said. "Even if we can return extra books we lose in storage and postage costs."

Even with shortages most students should be able to find their books with little trouble.

"As far as having books available, I firmly feel this is going to be one of our best years," Wehr

