

Skeletons dangle high price tag, but they hang tough

By Kathy McAuliffe

Make no bones about it. Skeletons are expensive.

A fully articulated skeleton, one with all bones intact, has a price tag of about \$400, according to Dr. Warren Stinson, assistant professor of anatomy at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Medical and dental schools in the United States use skeletons distributed by biological supply houses to instruct students.

However, the bare-bone facts are that skeletons are cheaper now than they were two years ago, Stinson said. Skeleton prices then jumped approximately \$100.

According to the Washington Post Service, the shortage occurred when Indira Gandhi, India's former prime minister, banned the country's export of skeletons. The ban created a world-wide shortage because India supplies most of the world's skeletons. When Mrs. Gandhi was voted out of office, the ban was lifted.

Of course, the plastic version of the skeleton always can be used, but this can pose problems for students, said Stinson.

"I don't feel plastic models are really as representative as they should be," said Stinson. "I really prefer true bone models."

Plastic skeletons cost about \$150 more than natural skeletons, he said. Plastic skeletons may be more expensive because they are more durable.

"Bones will shatter and break (while) plastic tends to give," Stinson explained.

When bones are broken Stinson supervises the doctoring of the damaged skeleton, but care must be taken when the skeletons are mended, he said. One repair technician working for Stinson pulled a real boner when he repaired a skeleton with two left feet instead of the usual right and left.

Currently the medical center owns 16 skeletons and 42 skulls, Stinson said. The most recent purchase was two skeletons in 1976.

Purchases are infrequent because a skeleton can be used for many years. Whether one lasts for five or 30 years de-

pends on how carefully students handle it, he said. Stinson said he "doesn't expect to turn over that many skeletons."

Although an increase in prices might

appear to be sharp, Stinson said, it would not affect the number of skeletons purchased. The skeletons are a necessary part of a medical student's studies. Stu-

dents gain an understanding of muscle placement and the skeleton's role as the body's main support system, he said.

While skeleton costs increase, the cost of skulls remains relatively stable, he said.

Dan Greer, assistant to the dean at the UNL College of Dentistry, said a skull purchased three years ago cost about \$65. The price for a skull now is about \$80, he said.

The Dental College purchases 66 skulls each year, one for each freshman dental student. The skull's cost is included in each student's books and equipment fee. Every student owns a skull (other than his or her own) which is used to study the mouth and general facial structure.

Bill Jordeth, junior dental student, said the skulls are necessary for the anatomy course every freshman is required to take.

"But we haven't used them that much since then," he added. "It's sitting in the case at home."

What are Jordeth's plans for the skull? "You can always go back and review the anatomy on a real skull," he said.

Some students take a personal interest in their skulls, said Jordeth. One student dressed the skull with a stocking cap and carried it with him in his car. Besides being good company, a skull will never be a back-seat driver.



UNL professor writes eastern train history

By Gail Reid

The great big rolling railroad bug nipped a UNL economics and business history instructor early in life and he has been writing about trains ever since.

Charles Kennedy has written railroad management histories since he was a post-doctoral student at Harvard University.

Kennedy, 66, is preparing a three volume history about the management of New England railroads from 1871 to today. He has been working on the text since 1950.

Some of the rare sources he has acquired for his book include a set of financial and shipping records from the Boston and Maine railroad, annual reports, railroad journals, and rare price lists.

Kennedy used his material to prepare "a systematic method of determining the ability, or lack of it, of a company's executives and managers," he said.

It was natural for the gray haired man with gold wire rimmed glasses to combine an interest in history and trains into a writing career. Kennedy said he acquired a love for history at Hastings high school, and worked for the railroad while there.

Kennedy began writing the management history of railroads after having taught and written management history of air transportation.

Two years after studying at Harvard he was hired by the railroad management of the Boston and Maine Railroad to write a complete history of its railroad, Kennedy

said. He has worked on the material since 1952, and the first volume should be published in August.

The railroad was unable to continue paying Kennedy's expenses after going bankrupt so Kennedy financed the project himself, except for several small grants from UNL.


Materials Kennedy has written are used in his classes. He said railroads are an example of business history.

"The railroad was the nation's first big business. The railroad executive, more than the inventor, or civil engineer, was the primary motivating force in starting and developing big business," he said.

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