

OPINIONPACKETS

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Our VIEW

Bookstore business

Independent stores drive better bargains

Ever bought a textbook at the University Bookstore or the Nebraska Bookstore? In the name of graduation, we hope you have.

Ever noticed how much you paid for those books? If you didn't, we wish we had your checking account.

In general, books required for courses at UNL are pretty expensive in those bookstores.

New textbooks are sold at the publisher's listed price. The bookstores offer many used books at a discount, but availability is limited.

Bookstore giants now operating on the Internet are dishing up huge competition for the bookstores where students buy their textbooks.

These booksellers, including Amazon Books at <http://www.amazon.com> and Barnes and Noble Booksellers at <http://www.barnesandnoble.com>, have instant access to thousands of book publishers and can ship any book in stock within a few days — often at a discount of 20 percent or more off the publisher's list price.

On their Web sites, you can search for any book by title and author, and its availability and price quickly pop up on the screen. Click another button to order.

Send that order, and you never stumble through the early semester UNL textbook-buying crowds, only to find a textbook has sold out. You never wait in line at customer service to be told the book hasn't been reordered by your professor, so you check back every day the next week.

Instead, the Web-ordered book arrives on your doorstep, and your studies can begin with a little less damage on your already-tattered collegiate wallet.

Using fall course book lists and local bookstore receipts, we assessed the Amazon Books Web site and found savings of \$1.50 or more on every new paperback book required for classes and priced under \$15.

Savings were higher on some hardcover books, more expensive paperbacks and older editions of popular textbooks, although not all books we searched for were available.

It's too bad the University Bookstore, which was designed to benefit students and faculty, can't offer these types of discounts to students.

Because the bookstore cannot offer these discounts, it may lose business as students and faculty discover book sales on the Web.

Recently, the university has been talking about whether to consider outsourcing the bookstore, or allowing an independent bookseller to replace the University Bookstore. UNL may soon form a committee with the help of Curt Ruwe, ASUN president, to get students' input into the decision-making process.

May we be the first to say it: Considering outsourcing the bookstore is a fine idea.

If an independent bookseller can move into the Nebraska Union and rival these Web-based discounts — or at least keep the university from losing money as its bookstore competes with Web-based competitors — the door should be open.

Haney's VIEW



DN LETTERS

Bad judgment

Concerning the ad denying the existence of the Holocaust: Printing, the ad was bad enough, but the error was infinitely compounded when the editor justified this act by saying that the "beliefs" expressed in the ad have a right to be aired.

I doubt that the Daily Nebraskan would have published an ad in which a group denied that slavery ever existed in the United States, and that history has been distorted by African-Americans to gain sympathy for their causes. Clearly, such a "belief" would have been dismissed as thinly disguised hate propaganda, and would not have been given space in the newspaper.

Similarly, this ad does not qualify as revisionist history, but as very thinly veiled antisemitism.

How then could this paper justify printing an attack on the Holocaust, which is so well documented by photos, by eyewitnesses and by victims, some still living? How could the paper subsequently defend the decision to print it?

At best, the editor was guilty of abominably bad judgment. At worst, well, you can use your imagination. Either way, I doubt that someone who has so little understanding of what constitutes freedom of speech has any business running a newspaper at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Joan Darling
Lincoln

America's game

I have no problem when somebody criticizes America's pastime, but please if you do it, make sure you check your facts before writing a column about it.

In Barb Churchill's column, she says that attendance figures are down more than 12 percent in the last two years. Wrong. In 1997, Major League Baseball games averaged more than 28,000 fans (more than 63 million people), an increase of 5.8 percent from the 1996 average of 26,891. Attendance rose 6.4 percent in 1996 from 1995. Obviously, that is down from baseball's 1994 average of 31,000 or more.

The strike of 1994 put a dent in the baseball box office, but it is on the rebound. This year's numbers are the third highest in the 128-year-his-

tory of Major League Baseball.

Churchill says inter-league play is supposed to counter fan apathy. Well, it did. Inter-league games drew 20.2 percent more fans on average, or 33,407 people, than regular games.

Ripping on baseball's off-the-field problems is hypocritical because baseball's problems neither exceed nor trail any other professional sport or any other profession, for that matter.

Finally, she takes a shot at the inability of families to pay for a day's fun at the ballpark. Baseball tickets are the cheapest in professional sports. The average price of a ticket is \$11.07 — less than half the cost of a ticket to an NBA, NFL or NHL ticket. It even rivals the \$10 cost to go to the Lincoln Community Playhouse to see Winnie the Pooh.

Baseball has taken its shots, and well deserved. But it is clearly taking strides to maintain its status as America's pastime.

Emily C. Williams
senior
theater arts

Laser art

The review of "Laser Ska" by Jay Saunders in Monday's DN brings up several comments we would like to share with DN readers.

Coverage of our shows this year in the DN has generally been limited to a few caustic remarks from Bret Schulte. We appreciate the fact that Saunders actually came to the laser show before attempting comments. Schulte, on the other hand, had labeled the idea of "Laser Ska" as "ludicrous" in Friday's DN before the show had even been performed.

Obviously, it wasn't "ludicrous" to Saunders, and neither was it "ludicrous" to us. Ska has a lot of high-intensity dynamics and represents a good creative challenge — remember that a laser show is an artistic interpretation of the music.

I might point out that we are the only planetarium (or laser company) ever to do a ska show (and the reason is the limited market audience). It would be nice to be applauded as a leader. We've been the innovators of a number of shows that other laser companies are now emulating. And we are trying to serve a broad range of audience tastes, which is what

caused us to attempt "Laser Ska" in the first place. Part of being a leader is charting new ground rather than just doing the proven.

In terms of the interpretation of individual songs, this is up to the laser artist and is as personalized as a painting or sculpture. Saunders mentions "Tin Soldiers" as one of the strongest pieces, while we who created the show thought it was one of the weaker entries. Far stronger, we thought, were "Sell Out" or even the artistic work in "Don't Speak." This just points out how individual tastes vary.

We do have 20 years of laser show experience. And we are leaders in our field. This weekend, more than 100 laser display professionals will be coming to Lincoln as we play host to the International Laser Display Association Conference. This organization includes members such as Walt Disney World and private businesses which have performed at major festivals around the world. Mueller Planetarium has won international awards for its laser show. Of course, we're not sure why all these folks are coming to see us when they should be coming to talk to Schulte, as he obviously is the authority on what makes a good laser show.

We appreciate Saunders giving his thoughts, as this gives us the kind of feedback we like. This was the first "Laser Ska" show ever produced, and if we can make it better, that's our goal.

Jack Dunn
coordinator
Mueller Planetarium

Thanks

In regards to "Our View: Thank you" on Tuesday, I have two words for you: Thank you!

But not from me. From those whose footsteps I followed, especially those who didn't make it home.

Cpl. Jonathan E. Hieb
veteran
United States Marine Corps
freshman
finance

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P.S. Write Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail letters@unlinfo.unl.edu. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.