

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: MIKE OTTO

**REBOOT, REUSE, RECYCLE** E-Books don't use paper and are cheap, but the U of A isn't convinced it's the best way to go.

# U of A has no plans to connect with new electronic textbooks

E-books might be hitting UBC campus, but U of A bookstore director Todd Anderson says that the PDF textbooks aren't the best option for students

LIZ DURDEN  
News Staff

A new method of purchasing textbooks is catching the attention of students looking for a less expensive option, but the University of Alberta bookstore is unsure about the new approach.

The University of British Columbia bookstore started selling e-books alongside hard-copy books this winter semester, pricing the electronic versions at nearly half the price of the traditional texts. UBC bookstore director Debbie Harvie said that the decision was about giving students choice.

"Basically what we decided is that this is a very new format so we would carry [new and used books] where we could find them, and e-books as well, so students could have a choice," Harvie explained. "It depends on what the student wants; some students like to have a hard copy."

Harvie further noted that her bookstore was trying to provide students with more options.

"The textbook market is changing quite quickly ... and I just want to make sure that we are testing things out until we find what works for students and ultimately what works for us at the bookstore," Harvie said.

While electronic books might boast a lower price tag, a function to search within the text, and are easier to transport than textbooks, U of A bookstore Director Todd Anderson was skeptical of e-books and was critical of Harvie's decision to carry

them.

"UBC was really premature in announcing this and even holding it up as something that's going to save students money. If it costs students time or it costs them hassle, it's not saving them anything. It's just a publicity stunt, and it worked—[they got] national press," stated Anderson, who said that the e-books currently available aren't the best option for students, as they often time out after six or seven months.

**"[E]-books ... are essentially the textbook, you cut the spine off and you make it PDF. It's not really the best use of the technology; it's just a book in PDF format."**

**TODD ANDERSON,  
DIRECTOR, U OF A BOOKSTORE**

"Right now we're kind of in a flux period, we're not sure where the industry is going to go, but as the model exists today, it simply doesn't work for students," he said.

But although Anderson is skeptical, he didn't completely rule out the option of using electronic books in the future if the products are upgraded and the texts became more interactive.

"[E]-books ... are essentially the textbook—you cut the spine off and

you make it PDF. It's not really the best use of the technology; it's just a book in PDF format," he said.

Anderson also pointed out that the e-books aren't permanent like hard copy textbooks and they aren't always entirely printable.

However, both Anderson and Harvie agreed that, despite the growing popularity of e-books, the best value for students was still to buy a used textbook and sell it back after the course is finished.

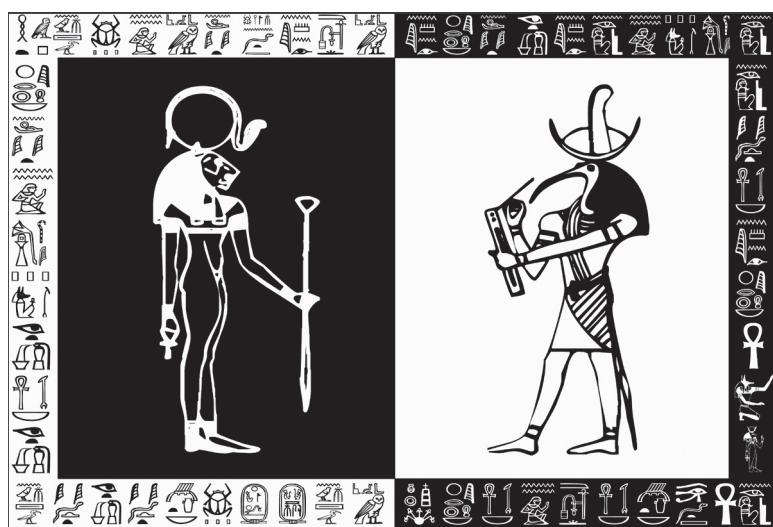
"I still think the cheapest way for a student to purchase learning material is to buy a used book and sell it back used; that's the most economically viable. Now we both know we can't get enough used books, so that's not always a choice for someone," Harvie said.

"The best value for a student is a used textbook that you can turn over," agreed Anderson. "With the time bomb, you can't go back as a reference."

Harvie conceded that the semi-permanence of e-books was a disadvantage.

"The downside of the electronic books is that they aren't resaleable," Harvie said, but stated that the versions being sold at UBC don't expire and are available to students as long as they need them. She also noted the benefits to the environment by using electronic books.

"From a sort of ecological viewpoint ... the books aren't printed. So in theory, if more books get made into an electronic format, there will be less printing done [and] the less use of paper," she said.



**FACT:**

The first issue of the *Gateway* was printed using hieroglyphics.

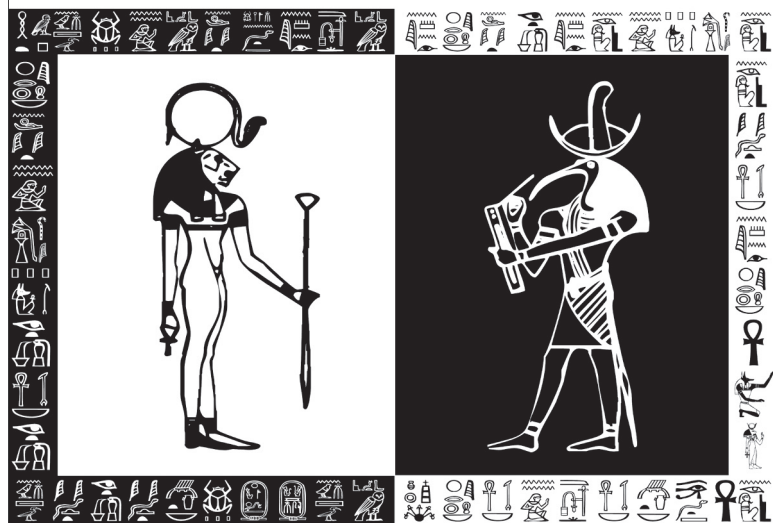
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# Lights, camera, National Day of Action

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA  
Senior News Editor

From coast-to-coast, university student leaders are gearing up to mark the Canadian Federation of Students National Day of Action on Wednesday, 7 February.

Here at the University of Alberta, a recent 3.3 per cent tuition increase and 10 per cent residential rent increase has the issue of affordability

in the province's postsecondary system under the microscope. The U of A Students' Union will be using the day to encourage students to come out and help them deliver a strong message on how they want post-secondary run prior to the Alberta Legislature sitting on 26 February.

Guest speaker Avi Lewis, creator of *The Take* and host of CBC's *Big Picture*, will join SU President Sam Power, Lister Hall Students' Association

Vice-President (Public Relations) Janelle Morin and Larry Booi from Public Interest Alberta to speak on postsecondary and discuss what students can do to bring about change in postsecondary education.

The SU event will take place from 12pm-1pm in front of University Hall. And for students feeling the pinch of rising university costs, a free BBQ and hot chocolate will be included for the participants.