

Textbook Acquisition Guidelines

UWinnipeg Library

Last updated on: 12 May 2023
Last updated by: Lauren McGaw, Head of Access Services
Owner: Head of Collections

Definition

A textbook is considered to be “an edition of a book specifically intended for the use of students who are enrolled in a course of study or preparing for an examination on a subject or in an academic discipline...sometimes published in conjunction with a workbook, lab manual, and/or teacher's manual” (Reitz, 2014).

Purpose

The Library receives many requests for, and questions regarding, textbook acquisition. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide clarity and a rationale for the Library's approach to textbook purchasing. The UWinnipeg Library's collection mandate is to purchase materials that support the research and learning needs of the University of Winnipeg. This mandate does not encompass basic curriculum materials and it is therefore not general policy for the Library to purchase textbooks. There are a number of reasons why the Library does not purchase textbooks:

- One copy will generally not suffice for an entire class and buying multiple copies for all classes that need them is not financially feasible.
- Textbooks are frequently updated and would require repetitive purchasing to remain relevant.
- Space considerations make it impractical to maintain growing collections of textbooks in library stacks.
- Most publishers will not sell e-textbooks to libraries, and e-textbooks that are available are typically prohibitively expensive and have limited user licenses.

Scholarly works assigned for classroom use but not originally designed for instructional purposes are considered supplementary material and may still be purchased under the Library's mission of supporting research and learning. However, the Library is not obligated to purchase specific editions for classroom use.

Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy will be considered on an individual basis by the appropriate subject librarian.

Possible exceptions include:

- A faculty member or instructor may place a personal copy of a textbook on reserve.
- The Library may purchase a copy of a textbook if the bookstore is unable to adequately provide copies.

Alternatives

To help ensure equitable access to textbooks for students, the Library works with faculty and instructors to provide alternatives to traditional textbooks, including Open Educational Resources and placing excerpts or non-textbook materials on course reserve. The Library may also provide access to e-textbooks through bundled subscriptions, but advises caution in assigning these titles as access may be removed at the publisher's discretion.

References

Reitz, J. M. (2014). ODLIS - Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science. ABC-CLIO.
<https://odlis.abc-clio.com/>