

Textbook Acquisition Policy

Purpose:

Most U.S. academic research libraries have policies against purchasing textbooks. UNM Libraries do not purchase textbooks for a number of reasons, including:

- UNM Libraries prioritize purchasing materials that support research rather than basic curricular material.
- Many courses require textbooks. Thus, it would be prohibitively expensive to purchase the required texts for all courses.
- Textbooks are updated often, which would require the regular purchase of new editions.
- Many publishers do not sell textbooks or e-textbooks to libraries, since doing so would cut into their profits.
 - When publishers do make textbooks available to libraries, they tend to be much more expensive than copies sold to individuals (often over \$1000 per multi-user license for e-books).
- Space considerations make it impractical to maintain growing collections of print textbooks in library stacks.

Scope:

This policy applies to all CULLS employees and users.

Policy:

As a general rule, UNM Libraries does not purchase textbooks, except in limited circumstances where the text is broadly recognized as foundational in the field or where comparable research materials are unavailable.

These guidelines do not apply to other assigned non-textbook course reading materials, most of which would ordinarily be acquired for the collection.

If UNM Libraries does not approve the purchase of a textbook, there are other options:

- Search the UNM Libraries catalog for existing library resources that cover the information. ([UNM Library Catalog](#))

- Consult a librarian about other possible resources. The librarian may be able to find non-textbook resources that contain similar information. ([Schedule a Library Consultation](#))
- Consult the Open Education Resources (OER) librarian to determine if there is an existing no-cost or open access resource available. The OER librarian can also provide support for instructors who wish to create or adapt their own OERs. ([Open Educational Resources at UNM](#))
- Loan a personal print copy of the textbook to the UNM Libraries to be put on Course Reserves. The copy remains the property of the owner and can be returned at any time. Sometimes textbook publishers will provide a free review copy to an instructor that can be used for this purpose. ([Course Reserves](#))

Definitions:

For the purposes of this policy, a work is a textbook when it has certain characteristics. These characteristics include, but are not limited to:

- the book usually contains tertiary information, reporting from primary and secondary sources in a summary way and at times with few citations of specific sources;
- chapters begin with stated learning objectives;
- chapters have summaries or reviews at the end;
- chapters have problems or discussion questions, frequently at the end;
- the book has other indicators such as...
 - new editions issued frequently;
 - produced by known textbook publishers (e.g., Cengage/Gale, Pearson, Macmillan, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Prentice Hall, Scholastic, etc.).

Procedures / Responsibilities:

Responsible Parties:

Collections Coordinator, Subject Liaison Librarians, Collection Leads group, Acquisitions Staff

Processes:

Step 1: When a purchase request is received by Acquisitions staff, they will search for the book in the UL's purchasing systems and see if it is classified as a textbook. If there is a question about whether a book meets the definition of a textbook, the staff member will refer it to the Collections Coordinator and/or the relevant subject liaison librarian for further evaluation and they will decide whether to approve the purchase.

Step 2: If the book is determined to be a textbook, the acquisitions staff member will respond to the requestor with a form email that includes: an explanation that it is the library's policy not to purchase texts; a link to this policy; information about other options for acquiring course material through the library; and a link to a form to appeal the decision.

Step 3: Appeal request forms will be sent to the Collections Coordinator, who will email the requestor acknowledging receipt and outline the appeals process.

Step 4: Appealed textbook requests will be evaluated by the Collection Leads group at the first meeting of the month.

Step 5: The Collections Coordinator will respond to the requestor with the results of the appeal and answer any questions they may have about the process and next steps.

Related Documents / References:

This policy is based on textbook acquisition policies from libraries at the University of North Texas, University of Virginia, Austin Peay State University, and University of Tennessee at Martin.

Policy Information

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Applies To: All UNM CULLS employees and users

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