Textbook Cache Pilot Project Proposal
Finalized July 8, 2017

Summary

Joshua Marshall, on behalf of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks, is proposing a one semester pilot project (Fall 2017) to gauge student interest in a textbook cache at Michigan Technological University. The goal of the textbook cache is to immediately make a greater number of textbooks available to students at minimal or no cost to them. By housing the collection at the Van Pelt and Opie Library, a central hub on campus, students will have easy access to the textbooks during the library's open hours.

Background

Students at Michigan Tech have expressed frustration with the increasing cost of course textbooks. Survey data (Student Watch) and anecdotal feedback have shown that students are choosing not to purchase textbooks, either because of their high cost or the uncertainty of whether they will be used by instructors during courses.

The textbook cache is just one aspect of a larger goal at Michigan Tech to address the issue of textbook unaffordability or non-use. The Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks (Charles Kerfoot, Chair), convened in spring semester 2017, is working to explore and promote textbook alternatives with faculty like replacing or supplementing textbooks with OERs or zero textbook curricula, and other options for procuring textbooks like Sidewalk Hero or short term rentals for students.

Objectives

The goal of the textbook cache is to immediately make a greater number of textbooks available at minimal or no cost to students. The pilot will officially begin on September 5, 2017 with the start of the Fall semester.

The textbook cache pilot will be a student-led initiative. The books will be displayed on shelves in a high-traffic area of the library, near the East Reading Room (in the space formerly used for the leisure collection). Each textbook will be stamped with "Students' Textbook Lending Project," tattle taped, and include a "in-library use only" sticker. The textbooks will not circulate via the library's online borrowing system; rather, during the pilot, the textbooks will be available on a first-come, first served basis. "How-to" documentation displayed at the collection will cover suggested best practices so that sharing is encouraged and access to the materials is optimized for use by the greatest number of students. Textbook cache books will be returned to a book return box or table near the cache. Before reshelving, library staff or student workers will place a pencil mark on the inside back cover of each book. This will function as a low-tech way to gauge each book's number of "circulations." The textbook cache stamp will make cache materials easily recognizable to those responsible for reshelving.

Current State of the Project

At the end of the 2017 Spring semester, Joshua Marshall spearheaded an effort to collect donated textbooks from students. Collection boxes were placed around campus and resulted in 400 usable textbooks. For full details of the collection process and suggestions for process improvement, see Joshua Marshall's report, *Ad hoc Committee on Textbooks Spring 2017 Textbook Collections Report,* submitted to the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on May 9, 2017.

As of 6/15/2017, Josh has performed minimal processing on the collected books. All textbooks deemed to be in good condition and relevant to the collection are currently housed on bookshelves in the library's storage area awaiting further processing. A full list of the books can be viewed here. Further processing will include: stamping the books with an ownership image/name (TBD) and adding tattle tape. Josh will require training from library staff on how to tattle tape the books.

Next Steps

1. Process the books (stamp, tattle tape)
2. Create and display a "how-to" document near the textbook cache so that students are informed how to borrow books from the collection and how to make their own textbook donation in the future
3. Place the textbooks in a visible area of the library for promotion and access
4. Organize the books by title so that course materials are easy to browse and identify
5. Promote the textbook cache across the campus community so that students in need of resources know that textbooks are available
6. Interview students about the value of maintaining a textbook cache on campus
7. Assess the use of the textbook cache by considering anecdotal evidence from interviews with students, staff cultural observations, and tallying "circulation" number marks from each book
8. Report out to the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks.

Processed textbooks will be placed on shelving in the library near the East Reading Room. Josh and Erin Matas, librarian at the Van Pelt & Opie Library, will collaborate to create an organization scheme and develop a document that explains how the system works and display it on top of the textbook cache shelving..

To promote the textbook cache, Josh will work with either Digital Media and Creative Services (creators of the initial textbook donation poster) for promotional material creation and/or the library's Communication Liaison Group, in collaboration with Erin.

Work Breakdown and Task Time Estimates
Timeframe: July 17-August 25, 2017
Josh can devote as many as 20 hours per week to this project, with the goal of having the textbook cache ready for student use no later than August 25, 2017. Erin and Josh will work together to lay out a detailed, daily schedule to track progress and meet weekly milestones.

July 17-21
Textbook tattle tape training for Josh by library staff.
Who: Josh and library staff member
Duration: 1 hour

Process the textbooks (stamp, tattle tape).
Who: Josh
Duration: 7 hours

July 24-28
Coordinate promotion of the textbook cache across the campus community so that students in need of resources know that textbooks are available. Josh will work with either Digital Media and Creative Services (creators of the initial textbook donation poster) for promotional material creation and/or the library's Communication Liaison Group, in collaboration with Erin. Needs to be identified early this week so that are communicated to supporting staff in a timely manner.
Who: Josh, in consultation with Erin
Duration: 5 hours

Create and display "about this project," "how-to" documents, and a suggestion box near the textbook cache so that students are informed on suggested best practices for borrowing books from the collection. Needs to be identified early this week so that are communicated to supporting staff in a timely manner.
Who: Josh, in consultation with Erin (who will work with CATS, if needed, on creation of signage)
Duration: 5 hours

July 31-August 4
Place the textbooks in a visible area of the library (near the East Reading Room) for promotion and access.
Needed: a dedicated space for textbook cache returns (dedicated table next to the bookshelf?)
Who: Josh, library facilities staff if needed
Duration: 3 hours

Organize the books (scheme TBD) so that course materials are easy to browse and identify.
Proposed scheme: by title
Who: Josh, in consultation with Erin
Duration: 5 hours

August 7-11
Distribute promotional materials.
Who: Josh
Duration: 2 hours

August 14-25
Complete any outstanding work on objectives listed above.

Timeframe: September 5-December 22, 2017 (AY 2017-2018)
September 5-November 17 (Weeks 1-11)*
Weekly schedules with detailed objectives to be developed based on tasks listed below.
Send bi-weekly or as needed reports to the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks that communicate feedback received via the cache suggestion box and staff cultural observations about textbook cache usage.
Who: Josh, in consultation with Erin
Duration: 1 hour/week

Interview/poll students about the value of maintaining a textbook cache on campus. Devise a log system for tracking this data so that it can be used easily for project assessment.
Who: Josh
Duration: 10-15 hours

Approach targeted on-campus organizations or entities about taking future responsibility of the care and feeding of the textbook cache. Develop instructional/essential documentation for workflows that have been used for this project.
Who: Josh
Duration: 5-10 hours

November 20-29 (break week and week 12)
Assess the use of the textbook cache by considering anecdotal evidence from interviews with students, cultural observations from library staff and student workers, and tallying "circulation" number marks from each book.
Who: Josh to collect and share data, Erin to assess
Duration: 5-10 hours

Prepare observations report and submit it to Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks by **11/30/2017**.
Who: Josh, in consultation with Erin
Duration: 2 hours

November 30-December 8 (Weeks 12/13)
Review observations report submitted by Josh and Erin and make recommendations for textbook cache project next steps by **12/8/2017**.
Who: Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks

December 11-15 (Week 14)
If it is determined that continuation of the textbook cache program is desirable, work with the newly named responsible organization to coordinate a smooth handover of responsibilities for the care and feeding of the textbook cache.
Who: Josh
Duration: 2 hours

December 18-22 (Week 15)
If textbook cache will continue, stage textbook donation drive.
Who: Josh, new org.
Duration: 3 hours

Risks

This project is being proposed as a one year pilot because of concerns about long term longevity. Leadership of the Graduate Student Government (GSG) have been wary of supporting this project because it requires long term involvement. However, with this simplified project plan, perhaps another case could be made for support from GSG or other organizations at least in terms of sponsorship and/or volunteer involvement as needed.

As the textbook cache cannot be sustained by one primary student (for now, Josh Marshall) and cannot be sponsored by the library due to its course textbook policy, it is necessary to identify an on-campus group or entity to handle the care and feeding of this project, should usage reports and student feedback support its continuation after the Fall 2017 semester. Initial ideas for organizations to take over maintenance of the textbook cache are the Inter-Residence Housing Council (IRHC) and the Waino Wahtera Center for Student Success.

Department Learning Centers could also be considered for housing discipline-specific textbook caches. There seems to be interest from some Center directors for establishing shared access to textbooks and this is an avenue to be explored.

As stated in the *Work Breakdown and Task Time Estimates* section, a decision about the future of this project should be made by the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks no later than December 8, 2017.

If this pilot project is successful and continues after the Fall 2017 semester, expansion of the collection is an essential consideration. Specifically, 1) where will the collection be housed? 400 books collected each semester for 4 semester equals 1,600 books, which requires approximately 133 linear feet of shelving 2) would the collection remain self-service or would some cataloging and a formal check-out system make sense and 3) where will financial support come from when additional resources are needed, ie. shelving, tattle tape, stamps, stickers.

Estimated Budget
Total estimated student hours (summer and fall 2017 semester): 60-74 @ $15/hr = $900-1,110
Tattle tape: $60
Stamp: $40
Total pilot project cost: $1,000-1,210

Conclusion
The textbook cache has the potential to be an effective way for students to have access to textbooks without being burdened with high costs. Once the textbook cache is up and running, one focus will be on the evaluation of its usage and student interest. Also essential is the creation of short, medium, and long term plans that will ensure its sustainability. Support from and collaboration with the Van Pelt and Opie Library and the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks is appreciated.

Submitted for review and comments to Ellen Marks, University Librarian and Library Director of the Van Pelt and Opie Library, on 6/30/2017 by Joshua Marshall and Erin Matas.

Submitted for review to the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks on 7/3/2017.

Budget and information about textbook caches at Learning Centers added per feedback from Dr. Charles Kerfoot on 7/5/2017. Draft3 submitted to the the Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Textbooks on 7/8/2017.