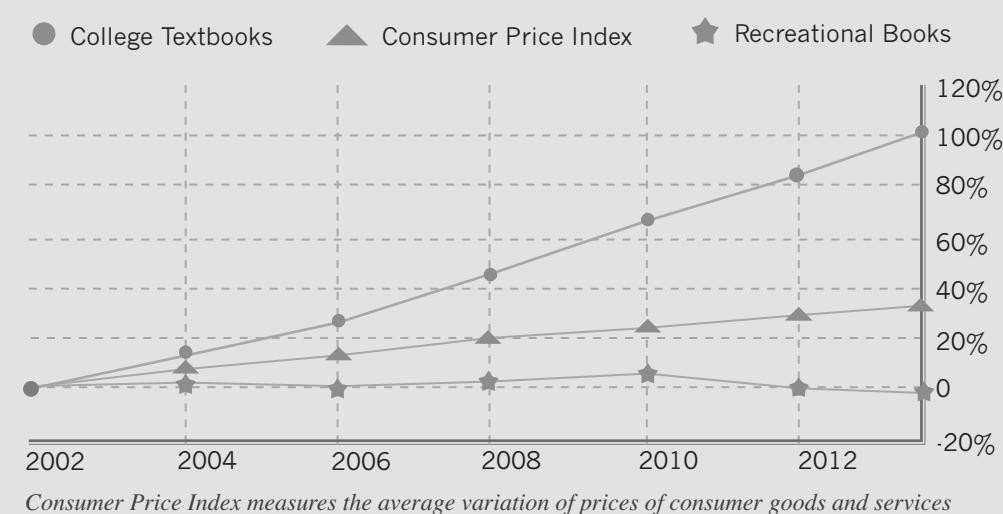


TEXTBOOK INFLATION RATE SINCE 2002



Truman State should adopt open-source textbook plan



Laknath Gunathilake

Already grappling with tuition, rent and insanely high utility bills, Truman State students faced triple-digit inflation of textbook prices when they hit bookstores a few weeks ago. Yes, triple-digit inflation. The price of college textbooks is increasing faster than tuition, health care and housing prices. According to a Dec. 24 report published by the American Enterprise Institute, college textbook prices have soared by 812 percent since 1978, compared to the 250 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index.

While price-signals play a vital role within a market economy, skyrocketing textbook prices certainly have had a negative impact for college students. According to a U.S. Public Interest Research Group report, 70 percent of students admit they skip buying some books to save money.

A number of factors contribute to the textbook price increase. According to a 2005 study by the Government Accountability Office, publishing companies issuing new editions of the same book each year has driven textbook prices up. Publishers claim

they revise textbooks to meet faculty demands for current content, but a question remains as to whether such content could have an effect on the fundamental premises, theorems and insights of many subject areas. While the 2014 version of a calculus textbook might have a glossier cover, better illustrations, and an improved font compared to its predecessor, I doubt the fundamentals of calculus change much from year to year.

Constantly releasing new editions makes sense from a profits standpoint — intuitively speaking, as a result of the used book trade, publishers make most profit during the first year of publication, and subsequently fewer profits during the second and third years after release.

Since the early 2000s, three major players have dominated the college textbook industry. Pearson Education, Thomson Learning and McGraw-Hill account for more than 67 percent of all textbooks sold throughout the United States, according to an article by economists Robert Carbaugh and Koushik Ghosh. Not only have they captured a large market share by absorbing a dozen smaller textbook and educational media firms, but the advent of new technology has enabled this textbook empire to drive up prices by bundling supplemental materials such as CD-ROMs, guided solutions, interactive software's and access to supplemental websites.

However, there is hope we might be able to overcome the high price of textbooks by joining the bandwagon for open-source textbooks. Open-

source textbooks are faculty-written and peer-reviewed like published textbooks, but they're available free online, free to download and affordable in print.

While the open-source textbook movement is far from achieving mainstream success as a sufficient substitute for licensed textbooks, the idea has gained considerable attention from many foundations and philanthropic organizations. A nonprofit called the OpenStax College, started at Rice University in Texas, has received funding from sources like the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to develop a library of open textbooks written and peer-reviewed by academic experts.

The promise of open-source textbooks led California governor Jerry Brown to approve legislation during 2012 that provided state funding for the California State University System to develop an online library with 50 open-source digital textbooks.

Truman has been recognized as one of the best value public schools in the country. Open-source textbooks have the potential to revolutionize education — it certainly is worth exploring the possibility of adopting them as part of our curriculum and to further our mission of providing a great education at an affordable price.

Laknath Gunathilake is a senior political science major from Colombo, Sri Lanka.

From the *desk* of the *Editor*

Our View: Firing squads aren't right for Missouri

Missouri Rep. Rick Brattin (R) currently is sponsoring a House bill along with cosponsor Rep. Paul Fitzwater (R) to allow the state to perform executions by firing squad.

The Index Editorial Board opposes this proposed change to the state's death penalty statutes. We are not here to debate the morality of capital punishment, but we see no need to barbarize the administration of the punishment.

HB 1470, introduced Jan. 16, states that "the manner of inflicting the punishment of death shall be by firing squad, the administration of lethal gas or by means of the administration of lethal injection."

The state currently allows executions by either lethal injection or lethal gas. We think these current methods achieve the desired result without subjecting the to-be executed individual to further cognitive anguish.

Executions performed by firing squad leave more substantial room for human error. Executions, were this bill enacted, would be performed by "five-person firing squad consisting of licensed peace officers."

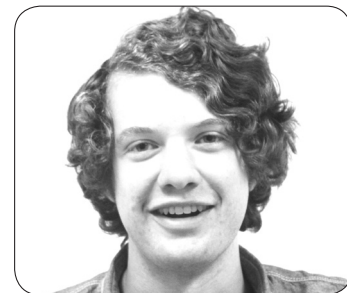
Regardless of the officers' skill levels, human beings would aim the rifles, introducing the possibility for a poorly-aimed shot. Individuals who suffer gunshot wounds rarely die instantaneously, even those who sustain gunshot wounds to the head.

Furthermore, this measure would be unnecessarily cruel for the officers performing the executions. Actively shooting another human being forces the officers to take a much more active and emotionally taxing role in the execution than pulling a lever or depressing the plunger of a syringe.

We are concerned this method might glorify the executions. The resulting blood and gore from the impact of a bullet with a subject's skull would bring unnecessary drama to an unfortunate situation. The death of a human being, regardless of whether or not capital punishment is morally defensible, should not be cause for celebration or undue display.

Though the debate about capital punishment will no doubt continue, we think all Missourians can agree that these punishments should be carried out as humanely as possible. Encouraging such violent executions is not fitting for a society that seeks to promote civil behavior.

Invest time in your future



Robert Overmann
Managing Editor

After calling the Index news office my home for many evenings during the past two years, I've come to appreciate an unpopular requirement of Truman State students who receive academic scholarships.

At Truman, any student receiving greater than \$2,500 per year of academic scholarships must complete at least 60 service hours per semester to continue receiving their full scholarships. This requires the student either volunteer to do service hours at an approved volunteer institution, or work a job to serve the campus community. Scholarship recipients might volunteer at the local humane society, work at the Bike Co-op, work as a laboratory aide, do student research or work for student media.

Initially, I did not understand the importance of this scholarship service requirement. Why can't scholarship recipients just focus on their studies? Why must we work for little or no pay, or face losing our scholarships?

My freshman year, I joined the Index as an opinions columnist. I knew that for the upcoming year I would have to find a place to log my 60 hours, and I thought column writing would be a relatively painless way for an English major to repay the University for scholarships.

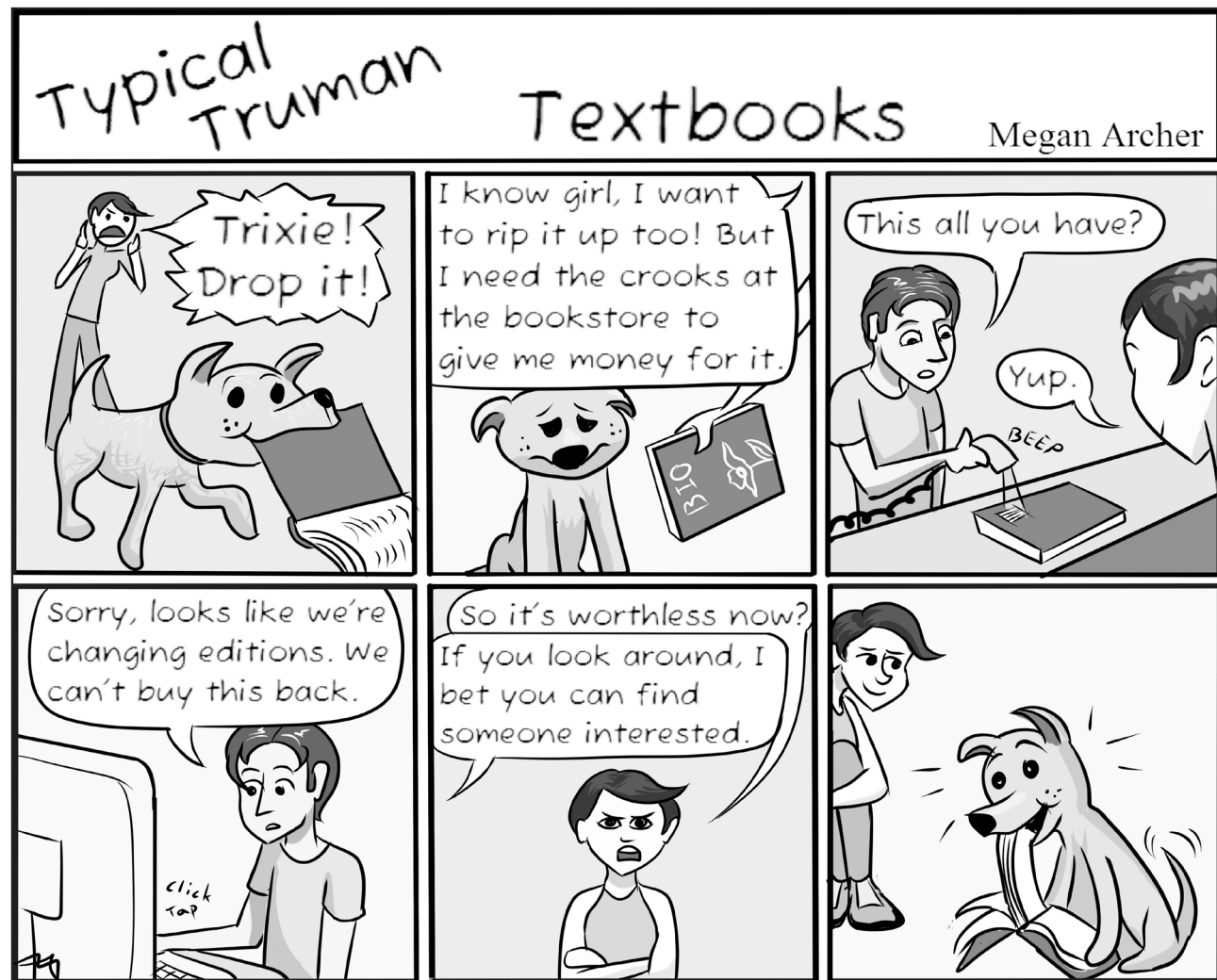
Before long, I became increasingly involved with student media and it has become a defining feature of my college career. Much of my résumé is filled with Index-related experience. I have picked up skills that will prepare me for adult employment — I know Associated Press Style like the back of my hand, and I can use Adobe InDesign during even the worst sleep-deprived, coffee-fueled states.

More fundamentally, I now understand that the students who the University invests in most should give the most back. The University does not, I am sure, choose to give away more than \$2,500 per year lightly. Just as a private citizen who invests \$2,500 in a given company expects returns from that investment, the University does as well.

I appreciate that the administrators of Truman had the foresight I did not. As a college freshman, I did not grasp the importance of getting involved with one's University. As a Truman student, I understand the temptation not to get involved, to decide one's time in classes is enough engagement with one's given field.

Truman is generous with its scholarships because Truman students are some of the best and brightest students from their respective locales. Take advantage of the requirement to fulfill your scholarship hours. Truman has invested in you — now invest time in yourself.

Robert Overmann is a senior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.



Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor-in-chief, managing editor, news editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

Letters Policy

The Index welcomes letters to the editor from the University community. Letters to the editor are due by noon the Monday before publication and become property of the Index. Submissions are subject to editing, must contain a well-developed theme and cannot exceed 500 words except at the discretion of the Editorial Board. Letters containing personal attacks will not be published. All letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced, signed by at least one individual and include a phone number for verification. They must be submitted by e-mail to index.opinionseditor@gmail.com or on our website at <http://tmn.truman.edu/theindex>. Include the words "letter to the editor" in the subject line of the e-mail. The Index does not publish anonymous letters to the editor. No individual may submit more than one letter per week.

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