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# **History of the Bookstore at Utah State University**

Pamela R. Stanger  
HONORS 490  
Spring 1993

Schola's Day Presentation

## History of the Bookstore at Utah State University

### Establishment of the Bookstore - First Location

USAC President Joshua H. Paul was in office for only three years (1894-96) but he was instrumental in incorporating many changes in the new College. One of these was to actually publish the 1895 curriculum in catalog form listing each subject with a brief description. Another was the establishment of the College Bookstore.

The exact date of the establishment of the Bookstore is undetermined, however, the 1904 Student Handbook includes a floorplan of the Main Building (Old Main) which shows the College Bookstore located on the first floor, Room 47. Room 47 was in the West wing on the south side. To enter, you had to either pass through the Financial Secretary's office or the Registrar's office. Since the Bookstore was organized under the supervision of the Financial Secretary, it is likely the Bookstore at this time had no employees per se, but used the personnel from the Secretary or Registrar's offices to sell textbooks at the beginning of each term.

Each sale had to be individually recorded in a ledger book, with the item and price noted. The ledger from 1904 is preserved in the Special Collections area of the Merrill Library. The entries that year show spurts of activity selling textbooks, with supplies fairly evenly distributed over the course of the year. Textbooks included Corporate Accounting for \$1.25, Advanced Algebra Lessons for \$1.70 and English Composition for \$1.00. The most expensive textbooks required were Geology, which sold for \$4.05, and a Treatise on Hydrology which went for \$4.00. The least expensive was the text on MacBeth, a bargain at only thirty five cents. Supplies were limited in scope. The Bookstore ledger shows numerous entries for pencils, pens, and erasers, all for five cents a piece. Steno pads and typewriter paper sold for ten cents. Supplies for Art students, were a bit more costly. Watercolors sold for 50 cents and drawing pads for fifteen cents.

The Student Handbook for the academic year of 1921-22 gives students the following advice: "Consult the schedule posted in the Main Hall for the time and place of meeting of your classes. You will be informed by your instructor as to the textbooks, etc. required. These may be purchased at the College Bookstore, Room 129 Main Building". It appears that the Bookstore is in a new location, however, the Student Handbooks of preceding years show the room numbers in Main Building changing several times while the actual locations remain the same.

## **Some Things Never Change**

In the 1922 student yearbook, *The Buzzer*, there is a joke about the bookstore policy of textbook buy-backs. A fake advertisement reads, "*New Books For Old* — The biggest book exchange west of Chicago. We have a large supply of books which we will gladly exchange. Anything from Shakespere to a dime novel. This is a wonderful opportunity. Bring in your new books and we will cheerfully exchange them for old ones. No extra charge for service." It is signed simply, The O'bliging Book Co.

Later in the same yearbook another ad exhorts students to "Buy your own books. Start a library this very day. Watch it grow from year to year." and ends with the plea, "Buy your own books—don't swipe other people's."

## **Bookstore Moves to Commons Building**

1934 is the first year that more detailed information about the bookstore surfaces. In the College newspaper, *Student Life*, there is an article dated Monday, September 10, 1934, titled "Construction of Student Commons and Home Economics Building Progresses." On page three the article states, "the ground floor will contain the college cafeteria . . . the kitchens . . . commuter dining rooms. The Bookstore and related service departments will also be located on this floor." This is a reference to the opening of the Bookstore in the Family Life Building which was built in 1935 as a Federal project of the Public Works Administration during the Depression.

Another article appeared in the *Student Life* later that year entitled "*Bookstore To Move into New Building.*"

"Next year the Bookstore will have new quarters in the Commons Building, according to Sec. R.V. Berntson.

"The Bookstore will be twice its present size and have all modern facilities. It will maintain its present policy of restricting its merchandise to school supplies, candy and chewing gum, and will make no innovation in its type of stock.

"This policy has been followed to retain the good will and cooperation of the Logan business men. The local merchants never hesitate to support the interests of the USAC and by not offering them competition on campus we are able to show appreciation for their favors.

"The department head and staff of the store will remain the same, according to the announcement. The switchboard will not be transferred, however, due to the complicated cable system.

"The present store (located in Main Building) will be remodeled into offices for the secretary's offices



and the windows will be continued the full length of the new division. The addition of new receiving windows will greatly facilitate the paying of fees and improve the registration system also.

"Something ought to be done about the candy bars, though!"

*(Editor's note: Since the Bookstore was originally accessed by walking through the Registrar's office or the Secretary's office, this suggested remodeling no doubt helped eliminate traffic through those offices during the rush of registration.)*

The Buzzer of 1935 has a half-page ad for the Bookstore which is an invitation for the students to "Greet the College Bookstore at its new quarters in the Student Commons Building" by Eric A. Johnson, Manager.

A photo from the 1935 Buzzer shows the Student Commons and Engineering Buildings, looking southeast across the Quad from the Main Building.

"The beauty of the College Campus was enhanced in the autumn of 1935 by the completion of the Home Economics Building which housed the School of Home Economics and the Student Body Officials. The building contained the cafeteria, bookstore, laboratories, classrooms, plus Faculty and Student Body offices." So states Professor Joel E. Ricks in his book, USAC- A History of Fifty Years 1888-1938.

Floor plans drawn in 1934 by the architects who designed the Student Commons Building show that originally the Bookstore was to have occupied the northeast corner of the ground floor, with a bookstore and separate book stock room encompassing over 1600 square feet.

Later that year, in December, the architects submitted a revised floor plan with the Bookstore location moved to the northwest corner entrance, consisting of a 270 square foot office for the manager, and just under 600 square feet of bookstore floor space, with a small closet for book storage. The size of the bookstore was sliced almost by two-thirds before it was even built!

The Bookstore was designed with two doors facing the main corridor near the lunchroom and dining rooms. A counter went across the room so that students had little room to crowd into to place their orders. The clerks were behind the counters, with access to the shelves of books from which to pull orders.

## **When Did the Bookstore Return to Old Main? (Or, Did It Ever Leave?)**

A point of interest is the way the Bookstore was run, according to former manager Dean Haslem. For many years, since its' inception it had been physically and organizationally a part of the Financial Secretary's office, and then the Controller's Office when the name was changed. It was during the 40's that a great controversy arose between some of the people working in the Controller's office, and as a result the main contenders were separated. One (Eric Johnson?) was placed in charge of the Bookstore and the other (R.V. Berntsen?) remained to run the Controller's office. *(Editor's Note: This controversy apparently started back in the 20's if you read between the lines of correspondence from these two men. Could this controversy have prevented the Bookstore from moving as planned into the new Family Life and Commons Building? My personal guess is that politics were the cause of the proposed bookstore size being sliced in the floor plans previously mentioned.)*

With the growth of the College due to the influx of veterans after the War, the Bookstore would have been very cramped in the Commons Building. If the small space of the Bookstore in the Commons Building was outgrown, the Bookstore would have had to move, probably back to Old Main and the area of the Controller's office, until the new Taggart Student Center would be built. The Hub (student lunchroom) had moved out of the Commons Building during this time and had been located east of the present library in the temporary union building (nicknamed the "TUB") until the completion of the new Student Union.

A 1947 Buzzer photo shows Bookstore jammed with students buying supplies. Another photo from the 1948 Buzzer shows clerks behind a counter. These two photos appear to be taken in a different location from the Bookstore in the Commons Building. Former Bookstore Manager Dean Haslem remembers that the Bookstore was located in Old Main in 1950 when he came to work, and that it occupied the south east wing in the basement where vending and the controller's offices are now which were originally used for Domestic Science and Arts. There were two small classrooms in the northeast corner for storage. These two classrooms were originally Dairy Rooms.

This photo from the 1952 Buzzer shows a co-ed sitting among piles of books. These books were textbooks from previous quarters that were stored rather than trying to return them. The smaller, rear classroom was completely full and the front classroom about half full of books. The other half of the room was used for the stock of supplies the Bookstore carried.

Professors sent the titles of the books they wanted to use in their classes to the bookstore clerk. The Bookstore purchasing office

was in the basement next to the Bookstore. In 1950, Eric Johnson was director of Purchasing for the College, as well as manager of the Bookstore and the person in charge of purchasing textbooks.

In 1950, many of the students were attending school on the G.I. bill. About one fourth of the Bookstore space was taken up with an office just to handle the paperwork and the billings for the G.I.'s. The rest of the area was designed as a clerk service system, as were all stores at that time. There was a counter running the full length of the store with about ten feet of space in front of the counter for the customers to congregate. There were two doors for the customers to use: the east door was the entry and the west door was the exit.

To purchase books and supplies, the students would write their own orders on a pad of sales slips and give it to a clerk to fill. The clerk would go to the shelves in the back to get the items that were wanted, and write the price for each on the pad. The customer would then take the items and the sales pad to the cashier at the west door. During the start of each term the counter was divided up into one foot segments with one clerk per foot. The maximum number of customers that could be handled at one time was 31. Sometimes someone would stand by the door with a yardstick and would allow only so many students to enter in at one time. Sometimes they even had to lock the doors for crowd control.

It took each clerk anywhere from five to twenty minutes to fill a customer's order. Even though at this time (1950) the student enrollment was about 4,000, the rushes were a nightmare. Students would be lined up in the hall long before the doors opened at 8 o'clock AM, and the lines would be long all day.

The first day of the first rush that Dean Haslem worked there, there was a long line of students in the hall still waiting to get in to buy their books. At five o'clock prompt they had to close the door on students who had been standing in line for four hours. The manager insisted on closing on time and would not even consider having the employees stay overtime after five. So the next day Mr. Haslem, the assistant manager, sent someone out at two o'clock and refused to let anyone else in the line. He asked for volunteers to stay late and they finished the last of the line about 6:30. Everyone thought they were nuts to cater to the students like that, but he continued that practice as long as they were in that location. One of the student wives employed at the time, Eva Jean Moulton, remembers the staff worked from 8 am until midnights sometimes with no breaks because they were so busy.

At that time, the University had very little money to furnish scholarships to athletes. One of the ways athletes were enticed to come to Utah State was to offer their wives a job. Many of the auxiliaries were allotted a certain number of the wives as employees. The Bookstore had nine that they had to place, some full time and some



part time. They had no say as to whom they got to hire. As one might expect, some of them were not as efficient as others. Some of them were really good workers, but then there were those who felt that they did not need to work because their wages were really a scholarship. They were required to show up but that is about all they did. Mr. Haslem remembers that they put up with that situation for about two years before they could resolve that problem.

In January of 1953 Eric Johnson was released of his duties as Purchasing Agent for the University and was able to devote his full energies as Bookstore Manager. That lasted only a short while, until he retired in June of that year. Dean Haslem was promoted from assistant manager to Manager at that time. There were many problems that he was to encounter during the next few years.

### **The Bookstore Moves Into the Student Union Building**

The new Student Union building construction took place from 1942-1953. Originally, the space for the new bookstore was planned to be self-service and was to be located in the center of the basement, where it is now. This was a new concept for the time, there only being four others in the nation. Colorado State University in Ft. Collins was the first, and Utah State became the fifth. The problem was that this area had no south wall. It was to be entirely open any time the building was open, the administration's idea of a self-service store. Bookstore management took issue with this plan, however.

So when the Bookstore moved out of Old Main into the Student Union, they were located on the west side instead of the center. They had traded space with the Fountain, which went into the middle area with no wall next to the bowling alley. The area the Bookstore had was west of the Post office, and it was just one big room. The front door was located about where the hall to the Briar is now located. In the northwest corner of the building were two large double doors which opened into the Bookstore stockroom. Unfortunately, the cafeteria also had to use this entrance to get to the elevator to take their supplies to the second floor. They also had to bring all their garbage out the same way! There was also a Student Workroom located behind the bookstore that student body officers had use of but they had to go through the Bookstore to get to it.

The Logan newspaper, the Herald-Journal, had a short article in September 1953 announcing the move of the Bookstore to the Taggart Center. "The new USAC Bookstore has been moved to the basement of the Union. A grand opening is tentatively planned for early September." In November 1953 the Utah State Alumna featured a full page article about the new bookstore titled, "Ultra Modern Bookstore Serves Aggies." The new sales floor enclosed 5210 square feet and the stockroom area included an additional 2580 square feet.



When you walked into the new location, you saw self-service art supplies on the left, under the windows<sup>1</sup>. On the right were shelves of books and supplies. In the center of the store was a long island, housing the smaller items such as fountain pens, class jewelry and gifts<sup>2</sup>. To the rear of the store were the textbooks and bookstore offices<sup>3</sup>. The entire store was set up to be self-service, with the exception of the center island counter. Three cash registers lined the front entrance, and a fourth one just to the left as you came in could be called into service during the start of quarter rush<sup>4</sup>. Originally, this register was to serve a walk-up window selling gum, candy and other sundries. The window was never opened but the cash register stayed.

The Bookstore so far in its history was not in business to make a profit. Even so, the Controller's office in the early fifties was insisting that the merchandise be sold at the full price. The extra money at the end of the year ("profit") would be used by that office to purchase trucks, tractors, or fix up buildings so that the bookstore would break even on paper. A statement had to be prepared for the annual report so the ledgers were filled out starting at the end of the year with a near zero balance for profit, and at the top was put whatever inventory was needed to come out with the desired balance. The first formal inventory and audit was made in before the bookstore moved into new their new location, sixty years after the formation of the bookstore! This required counting all those textbooks accumulated over the years which hadn't been returned to the publishers after each quarter. For the next two years an inventory was made, but the Controller's office still plugged in whatever amount was needed to come up with the balance that was desired.

Ordering and bill paying was similarly chaotic. When the Bookstore needed to order something, they had to type the order on an requisition form and send it to Purchasing. They in turn re-typed the order on another form which might take up to a week to get around to before the order would actually be placed. When it came time to pay the bills, the Bookstore had to type a payment requisition and send it to Purchasing for authorization. They saved them to send to the Controller's office in batches. Many times this could take up to two weeks. This problem was a by-product of the continuing feud between Purchasing and the Controller's office. Many of the problems of this nature were resolved when the Bookstore finally moved to the new location in the Student Union.

In the 1962, Cache Valley experienced an earthquake centered in Richmond. When the Bookstore staff came to work they found the merchandise on the floor. The Art Department was especially hard hit because there was a lot of paints, thinners and other items in glass bottles. Many of them were broken on the floor. The store was a mess.

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<sup>1</sup> 1956 Buzzer photo shows students at self-service counters. (p. 321)

<sup>2</sup> 1954 Buzzer photo shows jewelry and writing pen display case. (p. 266)

<sup>3</sup> 1958 Buzzer photo shows students at self service book shelves. (p. 327)

<sup>4</sup> 1955 Buzzer photo shows students in line at cash registers. (p. 259)

## Taggart Student Center Remodeled

When the University added to the Student Union the Bookstore was moved to the area where the east side of the store is presently located. It occupied the space where the Fountain and the Bowling Alley had been located. By 1958 the construction on the new addition to the Student Union was underway. The north side of the Student Union basement floor, in the center, would house all the departments in a 10,500 square foot area, doubling the size of the previous location<sup>5</sup>.

This gave the Bookstore management the opportunity to plan the new store and the move was scheduled for early summer. However, the remodeling took longer than expected. So new fixtures were ordered for Christmas break delivery instead. Just before school started in the Fall, the contractor asked for an expansion on his contract. The University turned him down. Five days before school started that Fall, the Bookstore staff came to work to discover that the contractor was tearing out their front door and that they were to begin their move immediately. The new location had not been completed, but they moved anyway. Since the new fixtures were not due to arrive for another three months, they hurriedly had to move the old ones down the hall and get them set up for the Fall rush. All the textbooks were sold out of the boxes they came in from piles in the middle of the floor. A 1959 Buzzer photo shows students in the self-service aisles of the newly remodeled store, and a 1960 Buzzer photo shows staff in the supply area of Bookstore.

At the time of the move to the present location, the Library had the space on the south side of the basement. When they moved to the remodeled Library building, the Administration was talked into giving the vacated space to the Bookstore. The General Books and Gift Departments were located there<sup>6</sup>. When the "Hive" was remodeled more square footage was obtained, and a little more on the west side came from a small clothing store which had been between the Bookstore and the Barbershop. A 1963 Buzzer photo shows student selecting supplies from shelves, a 1964 Buzzer photo shows students selecting textbooks, a 1966 Buzzer photo shows students in the textbook department, and a 1967 Buzzer photo shows the textbook department. A 1965 Buzzer photo shows the expanded cash register areas at the front of the store.

The office areas were remodeled in 1975-76, adding an employee lounge and additional office space on the north side. Art & Engineering moved from the office area across to the Supply Department area. The Textbook, Supply, Receiving, and Accounting Depart-

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<sup>5</sup> Buzzer photo shows construction of new south addition of Taggart Student Center. (p. 312-13)

<sup>6</sup> 1961 Buzzer photo shows cards and gift area of Bookstore. (p. 296)

ments were still located on the north side, and directly across the hall was the General Book Area where the table tennis room had been located.

In 1981 the University Inn was built. The Bookstore rented space in the lower level to help secure the bond for additional building funds and moved the Gift Shop there. When the Gift Shop moved into the University Inn basement, it expanded the lines of merchandise it carried. They had about 5000 square feet of floor space divided almost equally into thirds for Hallmark cards, clothing, and gifts. They added a film department and a music department with records, cassette tapes and videos through an outside organization. This was eventually taken out to make way for more clothing.

In the late 1980's the South expansion was added to the Taggart Student Center. The Bookstore decided to move the Level One Gift Shop back to the student center. The rent on the University Inn basement was too high to justify keeping it there, and with the remodeling, the south side now was much larger than was needed for the General Book Department alone. This allowed the Art & Engineering Department to move there, freeing up more space in the Supply Department on the north side. General Books moved back across the hall, reducing the quantity of copies of each title stocked instead of reducing the number of titles carried.

### **The Utah State University Bookstore Today**

The Bookstore is ranked as 45th largest in volume in the nation by the National Association of College Stores. Because of the support of the administration, the size of the facilities, and the tasteful decor, the USU Bookstore has received recognitions throughout its professional associations.

#### *Facilities*

The Bookstore facilities consist of about 15,000 square feet of selling space in the north and south sides of the Taggart Student Center ground floor, and about 5,000 square feet of office and storage space. Much of the selling space on the north side is devoted to textbooks, supplies, and general books, which carries over 50,000 titles of best sellers, classics, reference books, and more. The south side includes art and engineering supplies and the gift and clothing departments.

#### *Textbooks*

In 1990, the Bookstore incorporated the Express-A-Book service to fill the need to deliver textbooks to non-traditional, out-reach, and



continuing education students. Such students are not always able to visit the campus to obtain their required textbooks. Now they can call a toll-free number, obtain the titles and prices for required and recommended textbooks, and place an order using either a bankcard or an Aggie Express debit account.

### *Operations*

The Bookstore is required to operate solely on revenues generated through sales. It receives no funding from the state legislature. Its operations are audited and reviewed each November by the Board of Regents to substantiate this self-supporting status. As in any commercial business, The USU Bookstore must pay all utilities, floor space rent, data processing, salaries, and other administrative expenses out of revenue generated from sales. The Bookstore pays indirect costs as well as employee benefits. In 1990 the rental charges for the space in the Taggart Student Center was nearly \$100,000 annually. These rental charges are comparable to rates paid by off-campus commercial business.

Any net revenues generated by the Bookstore are required to be applied to the Student Center in the following order: (1) Retiring debt on the bonds used to construct the Student Center, (2) Provision of building operating and maintenance funds, and (3) building repairs and replacement funds.

### *Special Orders*

Most of us have seen and used the CD-ROM databases that are available in the Merrill Library. They are extremely fast and cover huge volumes of materials. But did you know that the Bookstore has a CD-ROM program of its own? In order to facilitate rapid and accurate location and special ordering of books, the Bookstore uses the CD database of Books in Print With Book Reviews Plus which contains all of the 950,000+ citations in the standard 12 volume set of Books In Print, plus literary review sources. These records are updated every two months.

The CD computer is available to staff and students in the General Book Section of the Bookstore. With it, one can search and locate books using title, author, publisher, ISBN number, Library of Congress number, keyword, subject and series title. The database should prove to be useful to anyone trying to locate material that they believe to be available from any publisher in the country.

### *Buy-Back Policy*

The subject of textbook buy-backs has always been a touchy one for students. The Bookstore buys used texts at any time during the quarter. However, the key to obtaining the most money for the

textbooks is selling them to the Bookstore before its quota is filled. If the book is to be used the following quarter, and the total quantity needed has not yet been filled, the Bookstore will pay 50% of the original purchase price, whether the book was purchased new or used. If the Bookstore has filled its requirements, or if the text is not being used the following quarter, the store will purchase the book at wholesale prices, and the books will be shipped out of state. The price offered by the wholesaler will vary greatly, depending on the type and popularity of the text.

The Bookstore also offers guaranteed textbooks. If a qualified textbook is unavailable the first day of class, the Bookstore will photocopy required reading assignments weekly until the book arrives. To qualify for the Guaranteed Textbook Program, a text must meet two conditions: (1) the text must be required for a course, and the faculty member must have correctly filled out a textbook requirement sheet and must have submitted the sheet by the order deadline, and (2) the books must be currently in print, and the student must complete a special order form and prepay for the book. The photocopies will be provided to participating students at no cost as long as the requested textbook has been purchased pending delivery. The purchase of the book is necessary in order to uphold copyright restrictions.

### **Vision For The Future**

The USU Bookstore, technically speaking, is in the book industry, but actually it is in the "people business". The success realized in the book industry is determined by the success in serving their customers, providing and maintaining an excellent working relationship with faculty and staff, and continuing good business rapport with suppliers.

The most recent innovation to take place at the Bookstore is the implementation of a bar code scanning system for the cashiers. This will allow faster and more accurate check-out for students next Fall when it is activated.

Larry Batt, recently retired manager, predicts that during the next ten years, bookstores will be getting into custom publishing. Like the giant textbook publisher McGraw-Hill, college bookstores will be able to compile custom texts for professors by using a computer database, with information on-line from libraries and existing textbooks. SCU in San Diego, California is an example of a college already doing just this. Custom publishing may eliminate the used book market, because the books themselves, as we know them, will be eliminated.

Utah State's Bookstore can consider itself in a unique position among college book stores to meet the needs of education in the remainder of this century and on into the next.

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