

Textbook Affordability

INFO 360 - Project



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Objective: To address the high textbook costs that are negatively impacting students at the University of Washington.

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Problem:

"\$300! For online homework? That's not fair at all!" - A random student purchasing a book at the UW Bookstore.

According to the College Board, college students spend over \$1,200 on textbooks and materials for class each year. With the average cost of books rising four times faster than inflation, about 65% of students skip buying required texts at some point in their career due to lack of affordability. A research done by VitalSource reports that students are opting not to purchase these textbooks result in negatively impacting their grade. New books are expensive, and most textbooks are only used for one quarter and tossed underneath their bed for the rest of their college career. Once students realize that textbooks are not worth the cost, students tend to not buy any more for the rest of their college career. The University of Michigan reported a nationwide trend of rising textbook prices. They report that its due to short revision cycles and packaged bundles with online homework or platforms.

Through our research, we found that all students come from different financial backgrounds and some struggle to purchase textbooks at a fair price. Students also lack the time and ability to buy and sell used books on their own. So we explored through existing marketplaces that students can buy and sell used textbooks.

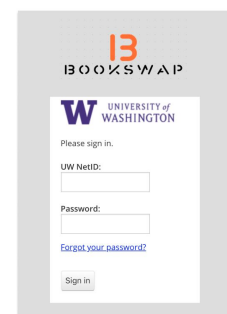
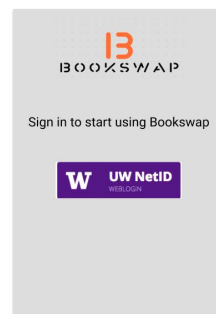
There are many existing platforms, like Amazon, AbeBooks and Chegg that provide students with a place to buy and sell their textbooks. However, these businesses have to make money on each sale and will markup the book higher than the seller is willing to purchase for. Another advantage to our platform is that students will be dealing with other students at their university and will not be required to pay for shipping on top of the price of the textbook. Lastly, professors sometimes provide ISBNs, but when they do not, it is difficult to make sure that you are purchasing the correct edition of the textbook. Our platform will provide a means to connect with MyUW, and similar sites for other universities, so that students can enter the classes they are taking and get the correct textbook. Ultimately, the existing solutions are businesses first and do not place the needs of the students before higher margins.

We want to prioritize students over businesses with our solutions in hopes that students do not have to worry about textbook costs. When we solve this problem, students will not have to report that their grades are negatively impacted due to the inability to buy textbooks.

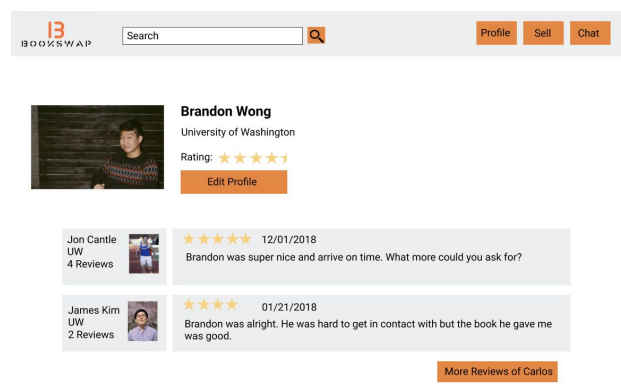
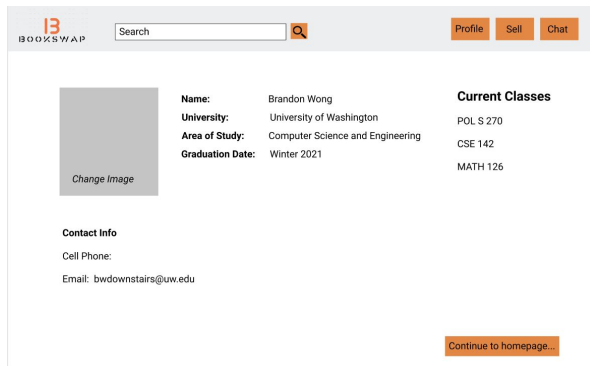
Solution:

Starting out, we came up with multiple solutions that can cater to our problem of students lacking the finances and time to buy textbooks. The solution, that was feasible and in the realm of legality, was a used textbook trading platform. We explored through our platforms such as Chegg and Amazon but they were all business first models that did not take into account the students. The textbooks were not much cheaper than the bookstores and finding the right version and edition of the textbook became too vexing. We wanted to create a platform that was simple, straightforward, and easy to use. Ultimately, this platform should ease the financial burden for most of UW's students. While allowing for an organized platform in buying and selling your textbooks for other students.

Our first page would be the login or create an account page. We will integrate the UW's MyUW system in order to create accounts and log in. This allows users to quickly pull their class schedule quickly and find the books they need.





Once you login, it will take you to the profile page, where you can add a profile picture and contact information. The other information is pulled from your MyUW page. We've added a button to take you to the homepage after signing in for the first time.





Once you finish updating your profile, you can see your profile with past reviews from other buyers. We've added this feature where you can see what others say about you to motivate others not to give fake reviews as your face and account is attached.


I3 BOOKSWAP Search [Profile](#) [Sell](#) [Chat](#)


MATH 126

Trigonometry MyLab
Kirk Triggstead



Finite Mathematics
Larry J. Goldstein


Mathematical Analysis and Applications
Michael Ruzhansky

POL S 270

Trade-Offs
Harold Winter


The Invisible Hook
Peter T. Leeson



Exit, Voice, and Loyalty
Albert O. Hirschman

CSE 142

Building Java Programs
Stuart Reges

Once the student finishes updating their profile, the student can click on the top left logo to go to the homepage which shows their classes with the required textbooks for each course. Through our interviews, students reported that finding the correct textbooks online was an issue with sites like Chegg and Amazon. Our tool can remedy that with the integrated MyUW system. On this page, the student can choose the book of interest.

I3 BOOKSWAP Search [Profile](#) [Sell](#) [Chat](#)

Filter By: Price Condition Order By: Price Condition Price Condition



Building Java Programs (4E 17)

Seller: Carlos Baudelio Arenas ★★★★★
 Condition: 2 - 4 years old
 Price: \$25
 Location: Odegaard Library

[Carlos's Profile](#) [Message Carlos](#)

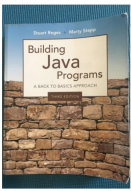
Author: Reges
 ISBN: 9780134322766
 STATUS: Required - Choose format
 EDITION: 4

1 of 2 [Previous](#) [Next](#)

If a student wants to buy a textbook for CSE142, he would click on the book and show him the first textbook available for the course. The user can sort by price or condition to get new listings; however, the first listing would show the cheapest and best state available by default. On this page, you can click to see the seller's profile or message the seller.

I3 BOOKSWAP Search [Profile](#) [Sell](#) [Chat](#)

Filter By: Price Condition Order By: Price Condition Price Condition



Building Java Programs (3E 17)

Seller: Nigini Oliveria ★★★★★
 Condition: Lightly used
 Price: \$50
 Location: CSE Building


[Nigini's Profile](#) [Message Nigini](#)

Author: Reges
 ISBN: 9780134322766
 STATUS: Required - Choose format
 EDITION: 4

2 of 2 [Previous](#) [Next](#)

This page is the second available textbook. This is achieved by clicking the next option. Having multiple options relies on having many users putting their book up for sale.

I3 BOOKSWAP Search [Profile](#) [Sell](#) [Chat](#)



Carlos Baudelio Arenas
 University of Washington
 Rating: ★★★★★
[Message Carlos](#)

Jon Cantle
UW
4 Reviews

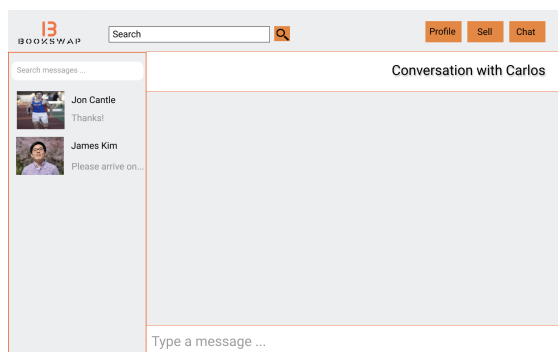
★★★★★ 12/01/2018
 Carlos was very easy to communicate with and the book was exactly as he specified. I would definitely buy from him again

James Kim
UW
2 Reviews

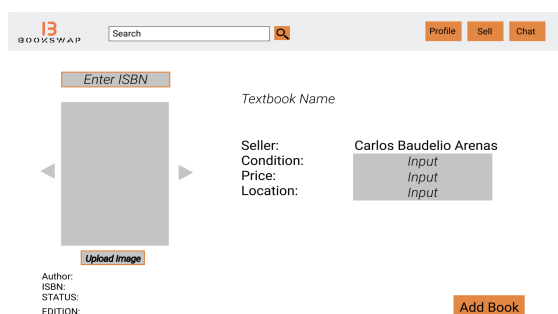
★★★★ 01/21/2018
 The quality of the book was good, but it took a long time to get in contact with him.

[More Reviews of Carlos](#)

This page shows the profile of the seller. It includes the reviews the seller might have on past sales. We included a reviews feature because it encourages sellers to be honest in their sales. You can also choose to message the seller this way.



Adding a chat feature to our product allows us to quickly communicate with our buyers and sellers without having to use other software to communicate with each other. Bookswap separates your private conversation to strictly conversations related to textbooks.

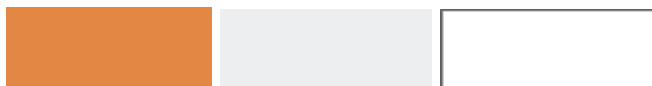


The add book page asks for ISBN number of the textbook which will generate the metadata of the book. The user will input the condition, price, and location for pickup on campus.

Font: Roboto

We used this font because it's clean, neat, and modern. Google describes the font as "modern, yet approachable" and "emotional." This is exactly what the product is trying to convey. We want to be modern in terms of buying and selling textbooks as well as being approachable.

Color: #F18330 #EDEEF0 #FFFFFF



When designing, the color was important in our design process. In the end, we chose an orange color for our main color. Orange combines the energy of red and happiness of yellow. We learned that orange is a very vibrant and energetic color that is considered more friendly and inviting, and less in-your-face. This fits into our message of wanting to create a platform that is user-friendly and inviting to allow more users to join our platform.

Design Inspiration

Most of the current solutions for the textbook problem already exist; however, they are all business focused that the company takes a cut. The other solutions also make sellers and buyers brunt the shipping costs as well. Since our solution is restricted only to University of Washington students, we eliminate the shipping costs and other fees associated with handling books elsewhere. We kept most wordings on the site limited to keep it simple and obtain what the user needs without having to read much of the website.

Evaluation:

The cognitive walkthrough is the best evaluation method we could use for our website. This is because our solution is straightforward in terms of accomplishing their tasks and the cognitive walkthrough tests to see if there are any breakdowns and evaluate where the problem could be better designed. As a result, we carried out one cognitive walkthrough with another student. We came up with a list of tasks that we would ask throughout the evaluations.

1. Log into your account
2. Find a textbook
3. View seller's profile
4. Message the seller
5. Put a book up for sale
6. View own profile

Evaluation Results

- 1. Log into your account**
Users were able to log into their account through the MyUW login.
- 2. Find a textbook for the asked class**
User struggles, when they log in, they get to the "Edit Profile" Page and do not know where to click next to find where textbooks are available.
- 3. View seller's profile**
Users were able to get to seller's profile intuitively.
- 4. Message the seller**
Users were able to message the seller of a book.
- 5. Put a book up for sale**
Users were able to get to the page to sell the book.
- 6. View own profile and edit**
Users were able to view and edit their own profile.

We discovered that the user struggled with one thing. When they first signed up, the website took them to the edit profile page. This page did not give an obvious path for the user to make to get to the homepage (the page where books are available). We've addressed this issue in our final prototype. During evaluations, users wanted a filtering feature to find textbooks by price or condition.

Limitations:

Limitations with our design are since we are implementing the MyUW system, it is only built for University of Washington students. This platform could be extended to other campuses with their unique school ID system; however, for the scope of this solution, we limited it to solving for University of Washington students.

Another flaw we found was that version of textbooks could become outdated and outdated books become obsolete for our solution. While one edition changes might not be too extreme; a course that has homework problems out of a textbook could cause issues with outdated books. If a textbook for a class becomes obsolete, the textbook is useless for other students.

Another limitation is that most listings are equal and sellers stand out only through the rating system. This could be a problem if there are fraudulent or illegitimate reviews for others. There is nothing a seller can do advertise himself other than price and condition of the book.

Also, if there aren't enough users, the application won't be practical. This application relies on our users using the product for other students to benefit.

Professors not posting textbook requirements on MyUW are also a problem for this site. This relies on the MyUW system, so when a professor does not update the course requirements, the site would not know which textbooks to display for the user.

This platform is also only limited to textbooks and not course material such as online homework, lab coats, and clickers. These materials are just as expensive in the bookstore. However, our product would become much more difficult to manage when including these other items on our website. We could not establish a clear line into what kinds of products could be sold on our site. So we limited it to textbooks.

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