

**Abstract submitted for the SaGES 2015 Conference**

## **Re-imagining Textbooks for Surveying and Geomatics Education**

N.W.J. Hazelton<sup>1\*</sup> and John D. Bossler<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wollindina Media,  
2925 Wendys Way,  
Anchorage, AK, 99517.

E-mail: [nwjh@wollindina.com](mailto:nwjh@wollindina.com)

Corresponding and presenting author.

<sup>2</sup> John Bossler and Associates

E-mail: [jbossler@aol.com](mailto:jbossler@aol.com)

### **Abstract**

Rapidly rising costs in post-secondary education, while at the same time society requires greater credentialing for jobs and registration, adds to the growing cost of higher education. Textbooks are part of that spiraling increase in costs. Modern technology has allowed publishers to make the release rate of new editions faster, while printing costs have dropped. But the price of textbooks continues to increase, while the lifetime of textbooks shortens.

A comparison of textbook prices to regular books of comparable size and complexity suggests that there may be a rip-off occurring here. Relatively little of textbooks' retail prices make it to the authors; most remains with the publishers and distributors. Printing has become more automated and efficient, and so its margins are being squeezed. Yet the price of textbooks has risen faster than inflation for several decades, adding to the financial pressure on the wider community. Unsold textbooks have to be returned to the distributor, and the cost of this is added to the initial cost of the book.

Students buy textbooks now more as a burden to be endured, than as an addition to their professional library. The book is bought at top dollar, even if used, then sold back at a substantial loss at the end of the course. For example, a new textbook may cost \$150 and a used one \$110. Either sold back to the college bookstore will give the student perhaps \$35. The used copy is marked up dramatically (back to \$110) and sold again next semester (a few weeks later), unless a new edition has come out, in which case the book is worthless and has to be replaced. To try to reduce the cost a little, textbooks can be rented for the semester, at somewhat less than the \$115 cost if a new book had been purchased and sold back. All these factors work against students using the book as a repository of core knowledge for their professional development over many years.

There is a need for a centralized repository of information on many specific topics to support higher education. Educating students to become professionals means, in part, conveying to them the body of knowledge associated with their field, and this is relatively easily contained in something like a book.

The authors propose using more modern and disruptive technologies to change how we think about and work with textbooks. These changes will reduce the cost of textbooks dramatically, encourage long-term ownership and use of textbooks, and make the books more relevant to their primary users: students and working professionals.

As part of the presentation, a model for a new textbook in surveying will be presented.