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Thursday, September 4, 2008

## Students Flock to Web Sites Offering Pirated Textbooks

By JEFFREY R. YOUNG

A new survey of students found that about a quarter of them reported hunting for an illegal copy of a textbook from pirate Web sites.

The survey was small—only about 500 students from two colleges—but it is one of several indicators that downloading unauthorized textbooks is becoming commonplace at college campuses.

The Student Public Interest Research Groups, a collection of independent statewide organizations representing college students, asked a handful of questions about textbook piracy as part of a study on the state of online textbooks. The survey was given to students at City Colleges of Chicago and Portland State University (*The Chronicle*, August 26).

Twenty-seven percent of the respondents said they had searched for a pirated book at least once. Only 8 percent of those surveyed said they had succeeded in downloading a pirated textbook, however. Seventy-five percent said that they expected that piracy would probably increase if textbook prices continue to rise.

"With textbooks regularly costing \$200, it's not a shock," said Nicole Allen, textbooks-campaign director for the research groups. "We obviously do not condone piracy, but it is an unfortunate reality of the digital world. I don't think this really told us anything we didn't already know."

Edward McCoyd, director of digital policy for the Association of American Publishers, called the survey findings "striking and troubling." He said the publishing group did not have its own research measuring how many students are downloading books, but it has hired Covington & Burling, a law firm, to hunt for pirated textbooks offered online and to send notices for those offering them to remove the materials. "I think there's just unfortunately a culture of piracy out there," said Mr. McCoyd.

Peter Anaman, senior Internet investigations manager for Covington & Burling, is one of the investigators searching for online textbook piracy on behalf of the publishers. "The number of infringements is just incredible now," he said in a recent interview with *The Chronicle*. "We identify thousands of sites each month" offering unauthorized books for download.

In another sign that textbook piracy is now widespread, a company called Audible Magic, which makes software to detect illegal file sharing on campuses, has just added a filter to hunt for illegal textbook trading. About 70 colleges now use Audible Magic on their campuses to search for music or movie downloads, according to company officials, though it's not sure how many of those will activate the new textbook-filtering tool.

Jay Friedman, vice president of marketing for Audible Magic, said that several college officials had recently asked the company to add something to deal with textbook piracy. The company is now working with several textbook publishers to get lists of textbook titles that the system will look for as it scans peer-to-peer networks on campuses.

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