

Leadership Institute Team Project

**By the Book: Understanding and Streamlining the CCP
Student Textbook Acquisition Process**

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INTRODUCTION

This Leadership Institute project had its genesis minutes after the team was formed at a Leadership Institute session in December, 2004. Team member Janis Laurie described the following scenario to fellow team members Jim Landers and Tarsha Walton: Janis' daughter is an undergraduate student at New York University. Before the start of each semester at NYU, Janis' daughter is able to go onto the NYU website, and, with relative ease, identify the course textbooks she needs for each of her classes and purchase those textbooks online—all in a single Internet session in a matter of minutes. “Why,” Janis asked her fellow team members, “can't something like that be available for students at Community College of Philadelphia?”

This idea appealed to team member Jim Landers because, as an adjunct faculty member in the English Department teaching evening courses, he had often experienced challenges with students who were unable to acquire the course texts in a timely manner because of the bookstore hours. As a member of the Banner Implementation Team, project team member Tarsha Walton saw that the concept of this project fit in with the idea of “one-stop shopping” that the Banner system was all about.

OVERVIEW

One of the challenges that face Community College of Philadelphia students at the start of each semester is the acquisition of course textbooks in a timely manner. Students meet their instructors for the first time and it is at that point, when they have actually started the course, that they are informed of the texts required for their courses. Students then need to make their way to the CCP Bookstore, which is at its busiest at the start of the semester, and get the texts they need for the semester.

This scenario presents significant challenges to students who attend CCP on a part-time basis on evenings and/or weekends. These students frequently need to make an additional trip to school to purchase books or purchase course textbooks well after the start of the semester. Even for full time students, there is a lag between learning what textbooks are required at the first class meeting and the acquisition of the text.

In general terms, the purpose of this project was to gain a better understanding of the entire system of how students acquire course textbooks at Community College of Philadelphia and to imagine possibilities for the future. More specifically, what the team wanted to explore was three areas of inquiry regarding how students acquire course textbooks:

1. The current options at Community College of Philadelphia in regard to how students get texts.
2. Options for students at other area colleges for acquiring course textbooks.
3. Changes necessary to allow CCP students the widest range of options possible for how they could acquire course textbooks in a timely manner.

METHODOLOGY

Background Research

The team conducted initial research to investigate whether or not other community colleges and four-year schools offered online book ordering to their students. These schools included Delaware County Community College, Bucks County Community College, Camden County Community College, Drexel University, Montgomery County Community College, Temple University and New York University.

What the team learned from this research was more of the schools studied do offer students some sort of online book ordering option than do not. Camden County College was the only area school out of those surveyed that did not offer students the option of online textbook ordering. At schools where students were able to order textbooks online, there is a fairly typical script to follow to be able to order books online.

For example, at Montgomery County Community College, students go online to the school website and are directed into the bookstore through a menu option. Through a sub-menu called “Information for Students,” browsers are directed to another menu called “Campus Information.” There menu options include one title “Bookstore,” which leads you to a page that briefly describes the MCCC bookstore. On that page is a link to the company that provides bookstore services for MCCC, Follett (follett.com). Once on the Follett site, you click “books,” then “textbooks,” then an eight-step process to identify your particular class (select state, then select name of institution, campus, term, division, department, course number, and section number) and the text(s) for that class. Students have the option of having the books shipped to their homes via UPS or shipped to the campus bookstore.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with (in this order):

1. Kathy Mulray, Site Administrator, Northeast Regional Center
2. Angel Rios, CCP Bookstore Manager, Barnes & Noble
3. Sharon Thompson, Dean, Division of Liberal Studies, & Mentor
4. Jim Spiewak, Director, Budgets and Financial Services
5. David M. Watters, Assistant Dean of Students, Student Life

Kathy Mulray was a member of last year's Leadership Institute team that looked into the problem of textbook unavailability. She provided both background information and offered insight into the general book situation at the College. This was very useful in terms of deciding who to interview for this project and also in insuring that "By The Book" pursue a different aspect of the book problem, which it did.

Angel Rios, bookstore manager, was the logical second interview. In fact, Angel was interviewed twice, once by himself and also with Jim Spiewak.

The first discussion with Angel centered on what is currently in place at the bookstore and what Angel perceives as shortfalls. For example, unbeknownst to many employees of the College, the bookstore currently:

1. Has a reservation system for students. Students can order their books by phone, pay by credit card, and pick up their books at the bookstore. Twelve students took advantage of this last year.
2. Has a system for faculty to order their textbooks online. Very few faculty members have taken advantage of this system, even though the bookstore prefers that faculty do so.

Some current shortfalls or limitations of the bookstore are:

1. There is no icon on the College website for the bookstore. Students must search through several menus to find anything on the bookstore. Angel feels that the bookstore should be much more prominently displayed on the website.
2. The bookstore manager has no access to the College website and email system which prevents him from making changes to the website and communicating by

email to the listserv. Email capability would be particularly helpful to promote services available at the bookstore as well as book and other sales.

Lastly, Angel was very receptive to the idea of online book ordering. It was pointed out that the research showed that all schools researched for this project offered online book ordering. The potential for increased sales is there, given that the ease and convenience may bring students back to the bookstore to purchase their books online. Also, Angel foresees making more used books available (to compete with the Spring Garden Street bookstore) which could add to the success of online ordering.

The next interview was Jim Spiewak and Angel Rios. The purpose of this meeting was basically to get the “blessing” of the budget and finance department. Jim endorsed the idea. It was emphasized that the intent of online book ordering is for students to order their books online from the CCP bookstore.

Sharon Thompson, the next meeting and team mentor, suggested that the team meet with Dave Watters who was heading up the conversion to the portal system, a system by which students could access their records as well as College services online. The team had originally planned to meet with the marketing department about the bookstore’s visibility on the website. Instead, the portal seemed a more logical avenue to pursue.

The meeting with Dave Watters was very productive. Dave not only explained the capability of the new portal system for students but confirmed that online book ordering was definitely possible. In fact, he said that he and Angel were in the talking stages.

Survey

The “By the Book” team designed a survey that consisted on nine basic questions about the students’ Internet usage in general and their knowledge of and usage of the CCP website:

Do you have easy access to a computer with a connection to the Internet?
Where would you be most likely to access the Internet if you needed to?
How often do you go on the Internet?
Have you ever made a purchase over the Internet?
If you have reservations about making purchases over the Internet, how would you describe your primary concern?
If you had the opportunity to purchase course textbooks for CCP classes using the Internet, would you do so?
Have you ever visited the CCP website?
If you have visited the CCP website, what information were you looking for?
Have you ever visited the CCP Bookstore site on the Internet?

The “By the Book” team distributed the survey to approximately 150 Community College of Philadelphia students as follows (a copy of the survey is attached, Appendix 2):

1. Students at Northeast Regional Center (via Kathy Mulray);
2. Students enrolled in Business and Industry sections at the Albert Einstein Medical Center, Federal Reserve Bank and the School District of Philadelphia (via Janis Laurie);
3. Students in sections of English Cap B and English 101 (via Jim Landers).

The “By the Book” team distributed the survey to students primarily to determine if students would be willing to order their books online from the CCP bookstore if that was available to them.

The results of the survey (see Survey Results, Appendix 3) showed that the students who participated overwhelmingly have easy access to the Internet (91%), and that students would be most likely to access the Internet from their homes or from work (combined 86%). Almost two-thirds of the students (65%) responded that they use the Internet either daily or every few days.

More than a quarter of the students (27%) said that they made purchases via the Internet “often,” and another 40% said that they made Internet purchases at least “occasionally.” Student respondents identified that their primary concern (67%) was the security of giving personal financial information over the Web. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of survey respondents said that they would purchase their course textbooks over the Internet if that option was available to them. A majority of respondents (70%) said they had visited the CCP website. The largest single reason for visiting the CCP website (53%) was to gain information about CCP programs and courses. An overwhelming majority (95%) said that they had never visited the CCP Bookstore site on the web.

CONCLUSIONS

All indications show that online book ordering would be a welcome development for Community College of Philadelphia. The bookstore manager and the budget and finance director are in favor of it. Survey results overwhelmingly demonstrate that students are in favor of being able to order books online. Lastly, compared with the sampling of area schools used in this project, the College appears to be behind the times by not having this service for the students.

Moreover, the adoption of online textbook ordering would present some significant advantages to both students and the college community overall. First, a more efficient system would benefit students because they would be able to have course textbooks before a course actually began. This would allow them to spend less time waiting in line at the bookstore and would give them the opportunity to start on their coursework at the start of the class. Also, a more efficient system would benefit the overall college community in terms of time because it

would allow the instructors and academic department personnel to communicate with the bookstore more efficiently.

Online textbook acquisition would also have a positive effect on students because those who are able to acquire their textbooks easily and in a timely manner will have a better overall impression of their CCP experience. Teachers and other academic department personnel will have a more positive experience in dealing with the textbook acquisition process and the bookstore and will reflect more positively on the school overall.

Finally, increased and more efficient business for the CCP bookstore means more business for the college, and students may bring more of their business to the bookstore if it were more student-friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It was clear from the interviews that the bookstore manager and portal manager need to have a meeting of the minds to take this concept to fruition. The key lies in having a commitment from the College to support the idea and provide the personnel and, if necessary, funding to make online book ordering a reality. A team should be formed consisting of the bookstore manager, persons involved in the portal implementation, someone from the budget and finance department, and representatives from other departments. A timeline should be developed to keep the project moving forward, and a deadline set for six months to a year from the date of the first team meeting. In addition, colleges who already employ online book ordering should be consulted for their ideas and experience.

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Appendix 1

Survey of CCP Student Internet Usage

The following survey was composed by the "By the Book" Team of the CCP Leadership Institute for 2004-2005. The survey is designed to get more information about how CCP students use the Internet and to determine the feasibility of CCP students purchasing their school textbooks via the Internet. Thank you for taking the time to fill in this survey.

Do you have easy access to a computer with a connection to the Internet?

- Yes No

Where would you be most likely to access the Internet if you needed to?

- At home At a friend or relative's house At work At CCP
 Local library Other _____

How often do you go on the Internet?

- Daily Every few days Once a week Once a month
 Never

Have you ever made a purchase over the Internet?

- Yes, often Occasionally Seldom Never

If you have reservations about making purchases over the Internet, how would you describe your primary concern:

- Security of your financial information No credit card
 Understanding of how to make a purchase Once a month Never

If you had the opportunity to purchase course textbooks for CCP classes using the Internet, would you do so?

- Yes No

Have you ever visited the CCP website?

- Yes No

If you have visited the CCP website, what information were you looking for?

- News about the school Information about programs or courses
 Information about CCP events Other

Have you ever visited the CCP Bookstore site on the Internet?

- Yes No

Other comments: _____

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Appendix 2

Results of Survey of CCP Student Internet Usage

	Sample 1 n=22	Sample 2 n=10	Sample 3 n=41	Sample 4 n=16	Sample 5 n=14	Sample 6 n=23	Sample 7 n=24	Totals	%
1. Computer with Internet connection?								150	
yes	19	8	37	15	14	20	23	136	91
no	3	2	4	1	0	3	1	14	9
2. Where do you access Internet?									
home	12	8	32	12	12	19	20	115	75
friend or relative's house	2	1	2		1	2	0	8	5
work	3	1	7	3	1	1	0	16	11
CCP	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	6	5
local library	5	0	0		0	0	0	5	4
other	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0
3. How often on the Internet?									
daily	8	1	17	9	3	11	10	59	39
every few days	4	6	11	5	5	3	5	39	26
once a week	5	1	6	1	4	5	6	28	19
once a month	2	2	4	1	1	3	2	15	10
never	3	0	3	0	1	1	1	9	6
4. Ever made an Internet purchase?									
yes, often	2	4	9	5	2	2	3	27	18
occasionally	5	0	13	6	3	8	5	40	27
seldom	2	2	6	0	5	5	4	24	16
never	13	4	13	5	4	8	12	59	39
5. Concerns w/Internet purchases:									
security	10	3	36	14	9	14	15	101	67
understanding how to	1	0	2		0	8	0	11	7
no credit card	4	2	0	1	3	1	4	15	10
not applicable	7	5	3	1	2	0	5	23	16
6. Would buy texts via Internet?									
yes	16	5	27	13	7	16	11	95	63
no	6	5	14	3	7	7	13	55	37
7. Ever visited the CCP website?									
yes	14	7	25	15	9	17	17	104	70
no	8	3	16	1	5	6	7	46	30
8. If yes, why?									
news about the school	2	1	2	2	1	0	2	10	7
info about programs or courses	9	4	25	11	7	13	10	79	53
info about CCP events	2	1	13	0	3	1	0	20	13
other	3	4	0	2	2	4	5	20	13
not applicable	6	0	1	1	1	5	7	21	14
9. Visited CCP Bookstore on Internet?									
yes	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	7	5
no	22	10	39	14	13	22	23	143	95