

Textbook Thefts

The Pen is Mightier than the Sword



Summary:

Textbook theft is a nation-wide problem. The high cost of these textbooks and the re-sale environment allows thieves to get easy money with very little risk. As the cost of textbooks continues to rise, so does the potential profit for thieves.

Project Coordinator/Contact:

Name	Erik Pearce
Position/Rank	Police Officer (Southeast Campus Community Officer)
Address	1429 Monroe Street
City/State	Madison, WI 53711
Phone	(608) 265-5223 [office]. (608) 262-2957 [dispatch]
Fax	(608) 262-9768
Email	empearce@wisc.edu

[Scanning]

The University of Wisconsin Madison campus identified a serious increase in textbook thefts from 2005 to 2006. This was evident by the increase in number of reported cases and complaints from the UW Campus community. The dollar amount of the textbooks stolen in 2006 was only around \$6,000. However, the damage to student confidence and the University's reputation was much higher.

[Analysis]

In October of 2006, Officer Pearce initiated a project to address the concerns of textbook theft. In comparing textbook thefts from 2005 to 2006, the number of incidents increased 164%, while the number of books stolen increased 314%. Several root problems were identified. One was the lack of student education, with many textbooks being left unattended or unsecured. The other main cause was the motivation behind the thefts. Thieves were targeting textbooks because of their high demand, high value, and ease at which they could be turned into cash. The core issue was the ability of the thieves to sell these books while maintaining complete anonymity because some stores were not checking IDs.

[Response]

To formulate a response to the problem, Officer Pearce studied the analysis data. He worked to educate the community about textbook thefts, he looked at possible locker vulnerabilities and also worked to have cameras installed in several of the problem buildings.

After many failed requests by the UW Police to get certain book stores to consistently check IDs, Officer Pearce approached the Madison City Council with the idea of requiring book resellers to check IDs for textbooks. Madison eventually adopted a ground breaking ordinance to address textbook resellers, which was determined to be the first such ordinance in the country.

[Assessment]

During this project, Officer Pearce arrested several key textbook thieves identified through ID checks at some book stores. This led the closure of 20+ open theft cases, a testament to the effectiveness of checking IDs. Since the textbook ordinance took effect on July, 1st 2007, there has been an 86% reduction of total textbook thefts from the same time period in the previous year. Additionally, it doesn't appear the recently stolen textbooks were specifically targeted for resale.

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Appendices: Attached to this submission are three news articles related to this project.

[SCANNING]

Textbook theft is a rapidly increasing crime on college campuses across the country. In 2006, several major state universities contacted the UW Madison Police to see if we had a problem with textbook thefts. These universities were puzzled by this latest crime trend and were looking for suggestions. At the start of this project, UW Madison Police made contact with dozens of other universities and searched online to gauge how wide spread the problem was. The conclusion was startling. It appeared that almost every university across the country was dealing with this issue and that the problem was growing.

The UW Madison Police Department's approach to these thefts was primarily re-active, just like most other campus police organizations in the country. We took a theft report and directed the victims visit one of two local (off campus) book stores that would buy used textbooks. After that, the case was (sometimes) assigned to a detective for follow up. However, often these cases were thought of as unsolvable and not worthy of police resource allocation.

In late 2006, UW Madison Police Department noticed a general increase in textbook theft reports. However, it wasn't until one particular case drew the attention of Officer Erik Pearce, the community officer responsible for the southeast section of the UW Campus, that this project got underway. This case involved two female business school students, Joanne



Joanne and Lauren

and Lauren (last names omitted). They were your typical college students. They were scraping by financially, and even shared a locker in the business school building, Grainger Hall. However, in November of 2006, they had their locker broken into. Joanne and Lauren had several very expensive business textbooks (valued at approximately \$600 total) stolen right before exam time. This locker theft was puzzling, as there were no signs of forced entry and no sign of lock tampering. With no way to study for their upcoming exams, Joanne and Lauren begged, scraped and borrowed to get the stolen books replaced.

Joanne and Lauren made every effort to ensure they were not victimized again. They moved to a different locker on a different floor and wing of the building. However, a week later, Joanne and Lauren had their new locker broken into again, and the new books they had obtained were also stolen (another \$600 worth). Again, there was no sign of forced entry or lock tampering. Joanne and Lauren asserted their locker padlock was secured, especially after being victimized a week prior.

When Officer Pearce took this second theft complaint, Joanne and Lauren were in tears and begging for something to be done. They were stunned, scared, and there was a sense that they were being specifically targeted for these crimes. Joanne and Lauren indicated that it was exam week and there would be no way to obtain the necessary books they needed to study for their exams, not to mention that the information they needed to study was highlighted in the original textbooks stolen from them.

In addition to the immediate financial and long term academic impact to Joanne and Lauren, Officer Pearce realized this problem was starting to affect the University on a

much larger scale. Joanne and Lauren both indicated that there was talk amongst the student population of how unsafe the business school was and that students were starting to avoid using the business school lockers. It was evident this problem was not limited to only the business school. This lack in confidence and increase in reported thefts was creating a bad reputation for the University and could easily affect future student enrollment and faculty recruitment. Though the dollar amount of the textbooks stolen in 2006 was only around \$6000, the damage to student confidence and the University's reputation was much higher.

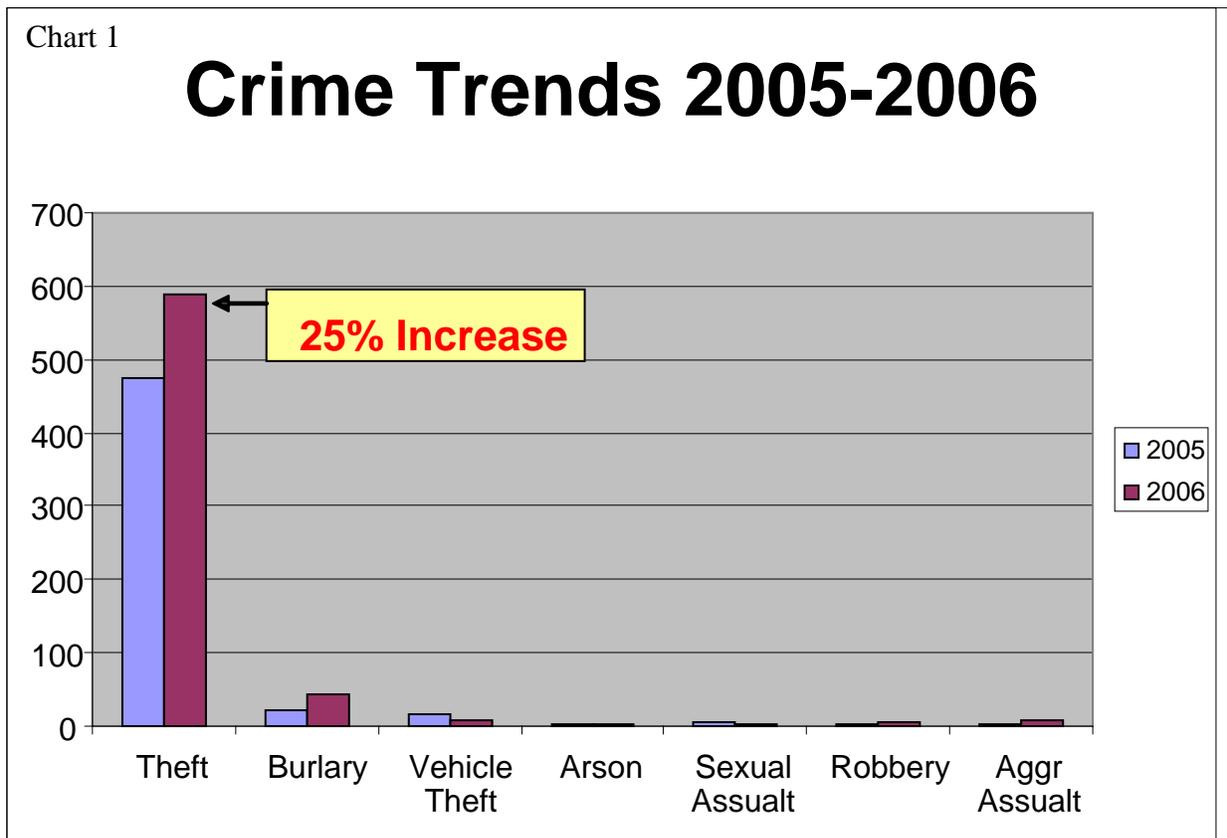
[ANALYSIS]

The analysis involved fitting together many pieces of the puzzle and studying the data. The UW Madison Police Department realized pretty quickly there was serious lack in community education. The UW Madison Police also identified a need to harden the target, or make it more difficult to steal. Lastly, the Department worked to identify the motivations behind these textbook thefts.

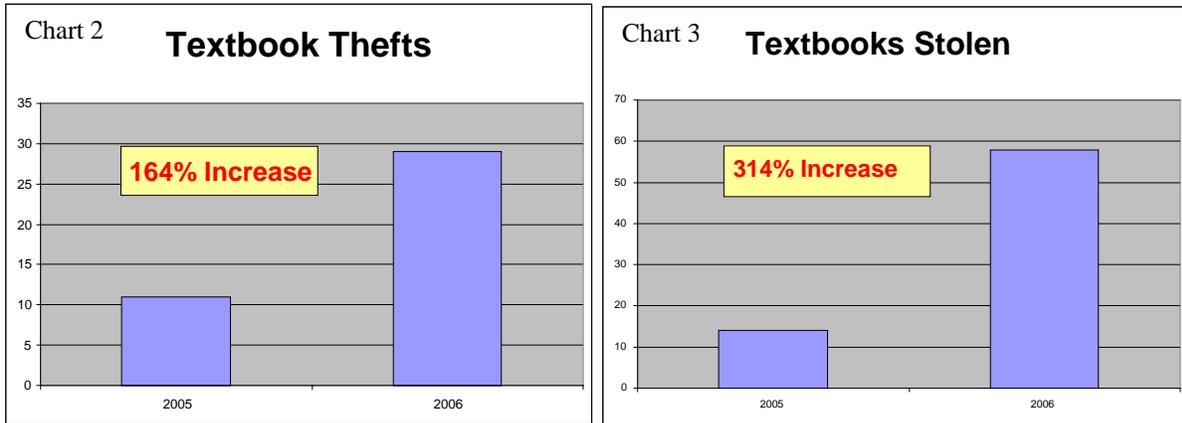
The UW Madison Police Department realized the textbook theft problem was not simply a UW Madison Police issue. Officer Pearce had already reached out to numerous other university campus law enforcement agencies to see how they were handling the problem. However, Officer Pearce wanted to get some local collaboration in solving the problem. During a Madison City Council committee meeting about the textbook theft issue, Officer Pearce connected with Professor Michael Scott of the University of Wisconsin Law School. Professor Scott, who is well versed in Problem Oriented Policing issues, offered to allow one of his graduate students to complete a research

paper into the textbook theft problem. In early 2007, Officer Pearce collaborated with UW Law School Student, Zeke Wiedenfeld, to study the textbook theft issue. Zeke was allowed unprecedented access to police reports and statistics to complete his research. This research paper was a valuable tool in helping Officer Pearce to analyze the problem. Not only did this research paper provide Officer Pearce with statistical analysis of the problem, it also confirmed some of Officer Pearce's suspicions about the root causes of these thefts.

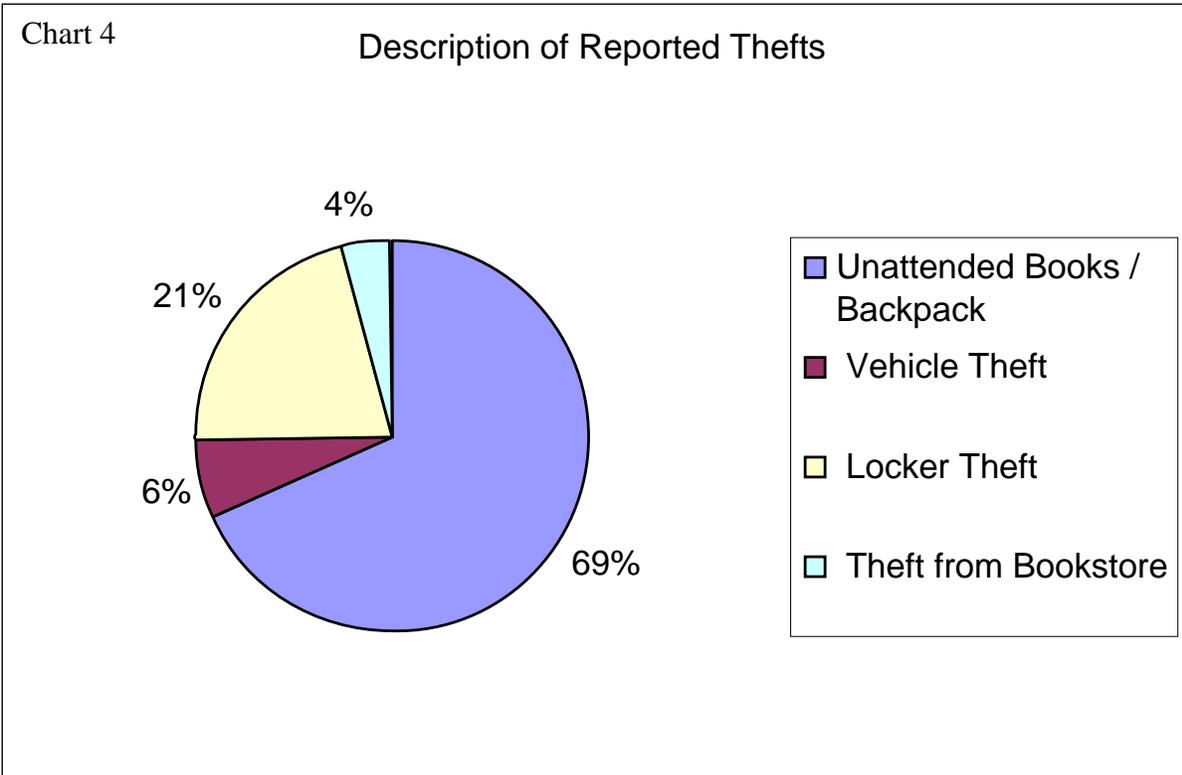
In reviewing crime statistics, Officer Pearce noticed a significant increase in thefts on campus from 2005 to 2006. Though most areas of reported crime remained relatively stable, thefts in general increased by 25%. (see chart 1).



Additionally, textbook theft incidents on campus rose a staggering 164% from 2005 to 2006. However, the actual number of books stolen increased at the rate of 314%.

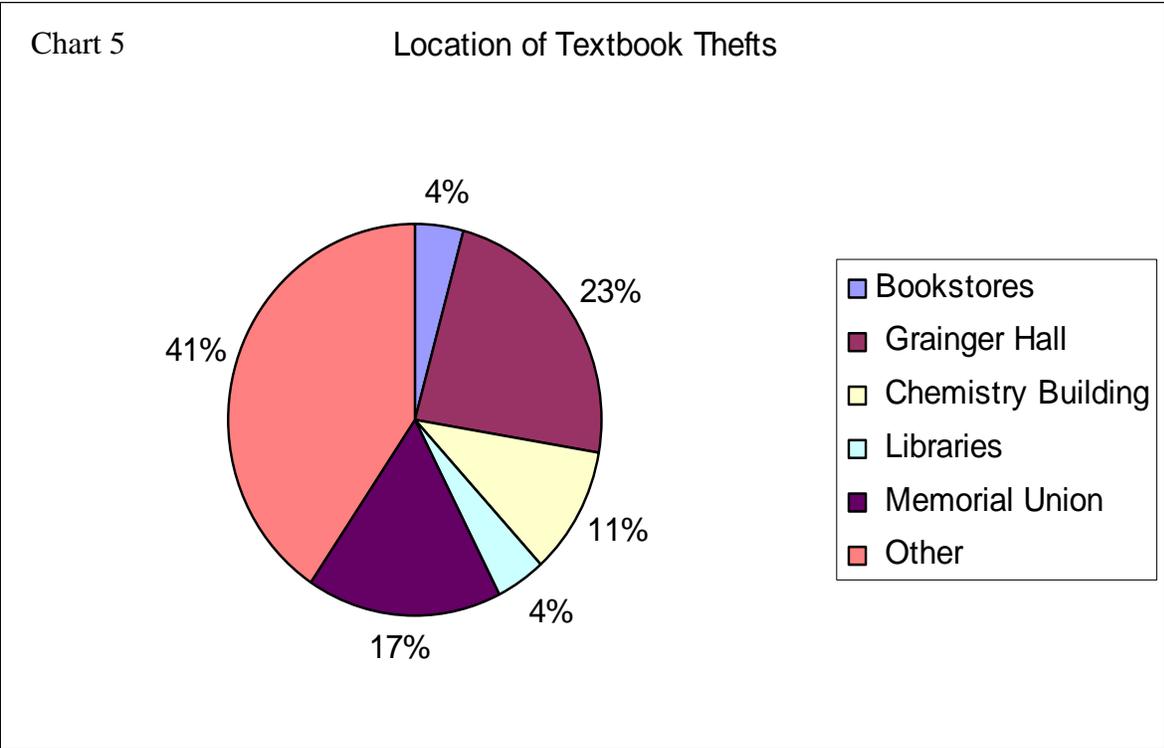


The lack of awareness within the student and campus community became readily apparent. One of the biggest issues was students leaving backpacks and textbooks unattended in various academic buildings on campus. This accounted for 69% of all textbook thefts on campus. Locker thefts only accounted for 21% of these thefts. However, the perception from the community and police department personnel indicated locker thefts were occurring at a much higher rate than in the past.



This increase in frequency and size coupled with numerous reports of textbooks being taken from lockers indicated the possibility that textbooks were being stolen in an organized and targeted manner, rather than from random crimes of opportunity, which had been the primary scenario in the past. (see charts above).

After analyzing the crime statistics, the majority of thefts (23%) occurred at Grainger Hall. Grainger Hall is a relatively new building and is the location of the UW School of Business. The location with the next highest occurrence of textbook thefts (17%) was the Student Memorial Union. The “Union” is an open student building, with dining, hotel rooms, a theater, a lakefront terrace and numerous conference rooms. After that, the Chemistry Building had 11% of the total textbook thefts (see chart 5).



Though educating the community about textbook thefts was certainly a priority, Officer Pearce also wanted to address the ease at which these textbooks were being taken. Because so many of locker theft victims were 100% sure they locked their padlocks, Officer Pearce wanted to investigate the possibility that someone was circumventing the locks. Officer Pearce realized part of his strategy would be hardening the target, or making it more difficult to steal.

Initially, Officer Pearce acquired several of the actual locks involved in the locker thefts, including the padlock belonging to Joanne and Lauren from Grainger Hall. Officer Pearce had several locksmiths and lock experts examine the locks to see if there were any signs of tampering (forcing or picking the lock). Officer Pearce thought it was possible a group of thieves had discovered a weakness in a particular brand or style of

lock. The conclusion was no signs of lock tampering existed and none of the locksmiths were able to pick the padlock used by Joanne and Lauren.

So, Officer Pearce went back to the school of business and met with the building manager. While walking around the building Officer Pearce decided to start tugging on locks (which all appeared locked). As it turns out, he was able to open 6 padlocks that students were pre-loading to make it easier to access between classes. Officer Pearce discovered this was a common practice among students, which created a serious security problem. Thieves were simply going down the hallways and tugging on locks to see which were unsecured. In the Department's efforts to harden the target, they realized the issue might fall back to education. In talking with students about this practice, most felt that cheaper locks might be more difficult to open properly, so they were not fully seating the padlock in order to speed things up between classes.

Other issues with target vulnerability were identified. First, the secluded nature of many of the locker hallways allowed thieves relative privacy when stealing textbooks. Second, there were often no identifying marks on the textbooks. And due to the off-campus nature of the bookstores and with student purchasing books online, it made it difficult to standardize a book tagging system commonly used at other smaller universities.

The next phase of the analysis revealed the driving motivational force behind these textbook thefts... their inherent value and the ease at which thieves were able to convert the stolen textbooks into quick cash.

Students routinely sell their textbooks back to resale stores when they are done with them. This allows other students the opportunity to purchase these second hand books

at a discounted price. However, savvy thieves in the Madison area realized these textbooks offered quick cash with little risk of the stolen books being traced back to them. One of the issues unique to Madison is the several private book resellers that are located just off-campus. Two of these stores are larger and compete with each other.

The first store, “The University Book Store”, has been in business for 20 years, requires the seller provide an ID and has video surveillance. Consequently, they do not often get stolen textbooks brought in for resale. The other store, “The Underground Textbook Exchange”, was a relatively new business with no video surveillance or ID requirements.

The UW Madison Police Department’s typical response to a textbook theft was to send the victims to both of these book stores to ask if their book title had recently been bought back. Officer Pearce found that thieves were demonstrating a preference for The Underground Textbook Exchange, where they weren’t required to show ID or have their video images captured. Often, the victims would miss the thieves by a matter of minutes. It seemed the thieves would steal the textbooks and sell them within an hour. In these instances, the suspect descriptions were vague and not helpful (ie. white male, college age, wearing a red sweatshirt). Officer Pearce knew getting the textbook stores to consistently check ID’s was going to be a challenge.

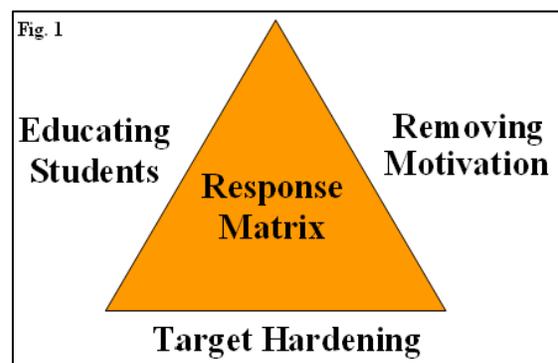
Members of the UW Police Department, including Officer Pearce, had approached the owner of The Underground Textbook Exchange several times in the past, and were told they’d be happy to check IDs and keep a log of the books sold back. However, the reality was little, if any, compliance was observed. In December of 2006, Officer Pearce

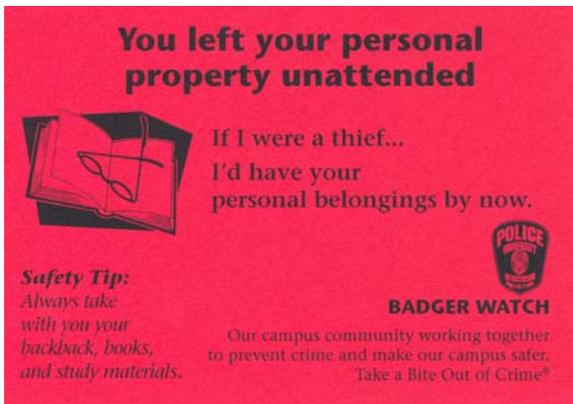
approached the owner of The Underground Textbook Exchange and again asked for the store's cooperation. The owner's reply was the same, that they would check IDs when it was convenient for their staff to do so. Officer Pearce was also told there was a concern that students would be inconvenienced by ID checks. It was apparent their cooperation would not be consistent.

Officer Pearce realized The Underground Textbook Exchange actually benefited from the textbook thefts. For example, a \$180 stolen text might be bought back for \$70, but then sold to another student for \$120. Every time a text was stolen, it created a new customer who would then have to go out and buy a replacement textbook. Even though The Underground Textbook Exchange didn't directly encourage these thefts, their relaxed policy of anonymous buy-backs provided enough financial motivation to keep the offenders busy.

[RESPONSE]

Officer Pearce's response was based primarily on information learned during the Analysis portion of the SARA model. The response involved numerous community representatives, from the students, lock experts, the building managers, textbook resellers, and even the Madison City Council. Officer Pearce realized the response would need to be multi-pronged to have any chance of success.





Following the RESPONSE MATRIX (Fig. 1), Officer Pearce worked to educate the community. Since the analysis showed 69% of all textbook thefts occurred because they were left unattended, Officer Pearce worked with key campus buildings, identified during the

analysis, to have signs posted in study areas to warn students about the thefts and to urge them to never leave their valuables unattended. Officer Pearce also used red colored cards to remind students to secure their property. These cards were made available to building managers to leave near unattended property.

Since the analysis showed the next biggest category of textbook thefts (23%) were those taken from lockers, Officer Pearce asked building managers to post warning signs near the lockers. Since the analysis indicated these locker thefts were likely caused by students “pre-loading” their locks, these signs instructed students NOT to pre-load their lockers and asked them to report anyone seen “tugging” on locks.

To address overall community education and awareness, numerous articles were published in student news media and our monthly police newsletters.

To address target hardening and increase the risks for offenders, Officer Pearce worked with several buildings to get cameras installed in high theft areas. Getting cameras installed involved overcoming major legalities with FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act). It was determined that any cameras installed on the UW Madison campus might fall under the regulation of FERPA, as any recording of a student could

constitute an “educational record”. According to FERPA, any cameras installed needed to be under the control of the UW Madison Police Department. Building managers were receptive to the idea of cameras and were willing to install modest security camera systems. However, the regulation and red tape increased the costs astronomically. For instance, one building planned to purchase and install an 8-camera system for around \$5,000. However, when they started to encounter FERPA restrictions, the costs skyrocketed to near \$60,000. To get around these restrictions, Officer Pearce worked with buildings to find alternate funding sources and to make sure they purchased compatible equipment from the start.

The analysis identified two buildings with the most textbook thefts, Grainger Hall, with 23% of all textbook thefts, and the Memorial Union with 17%. These two buildings currently have cameras systems installed, which Officer Pearce believes has had a significant deterrent effect. Officer Pearce is continuing to work with these and other buildings to get cameras installed or to expand their existing camera systems.

Another target hardening effort involved changing how several buildings operated regarding student lockers. In the past, many buildings charged money for padlock rentals, which caused many students to purchase lower quality locks. For instance, Grainger Hall now provides higher quality padlocks free of charge to students. Since the analysis showed that lower quality locks might encourage students to pre-load them, the UW Madison Police Department feels this effort is beneficial.

To address the motivational issues and to disrupt the stolen textbook market, Officer Pearce contacted Madison City Council President Austin King in December of 2006.

Officer Pearce informed Rep. King of the problem regarding textbook thefts. As a current UW Student, Rep. King appreciated the scope of the problem and the potential for adverse effects for the University. Rep. King and Officer Pearce discussed adding textbooks to an already existing Madison City Ordinance which requires pawn shop retailers to check ID's and track high value electronics. After numerous hearings, meetings, and legal revisions, the textbook ordinance was finally enacted on May 1st and took effect on July 1, 2007. This groundbreaking ordinance was determined to be the FIRST such ordinance in the country. It also received recognition by several national news organizations, including USA Today and the Associated Press.

This ordinance was not without controversy or roadblocks. Madison is a hotbed of political activism and many in the public saw this ordinance as a way for government to secretly "spy" on people's to find out what they were reading. Continued public education on the ordinance's true purpose eventually won over many critics.

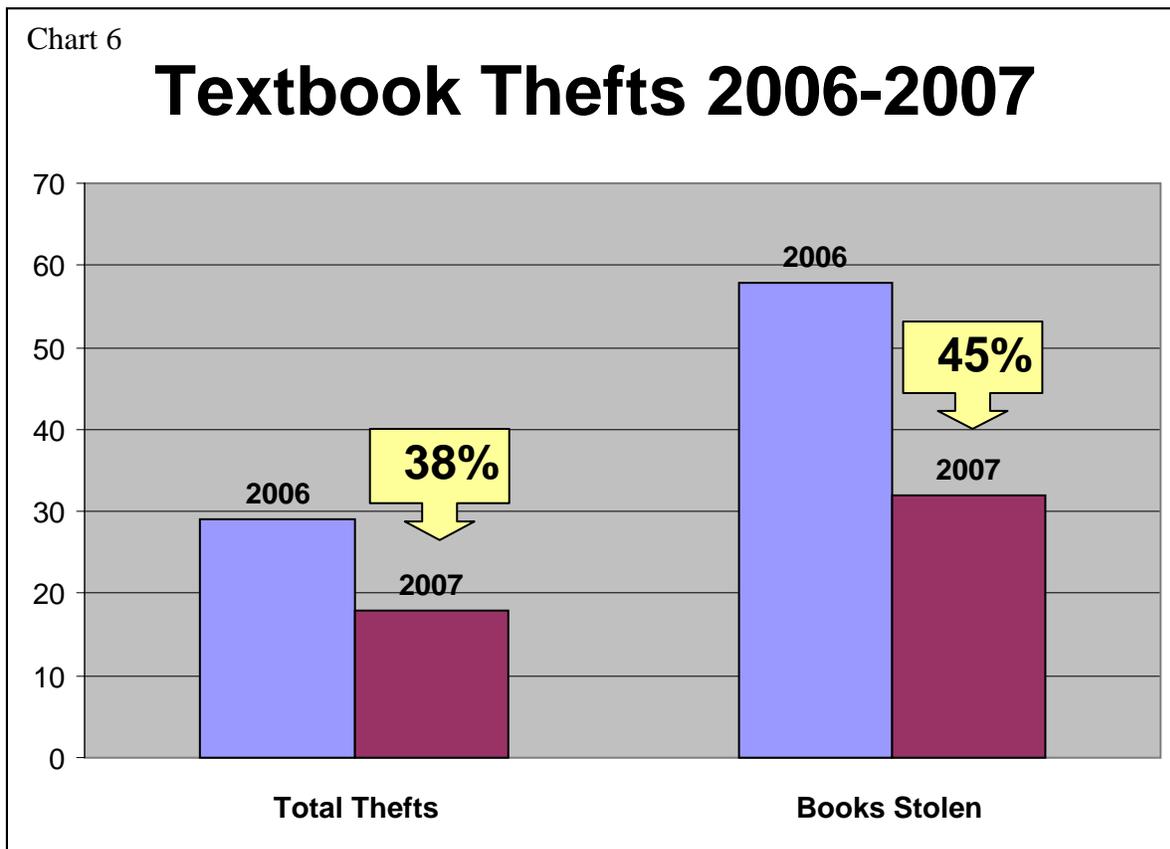
The owner of The Underground Textbook Exchange, was vocal in his opposition of the ordinance, citing that it was too much of a burden to his business and would drive his student customers away. However, most students realized this ordinance leveled the playing field of book resellers, which prevented displacement of the problem.

Yet another issue was that Rep. Austin King, the Textbook Ordinance sponsor, retired from the Madison City Council in 2007, but luckily City Alders Eli Judge and Michael Verveer continued to revise and push for the passage of the ordinance.

[ASSESSMENT]

In assessing the actual success of the overall Textbook POP project, Officer Pearce studied statistics and also looked for community feedback on the perceptions of the problem.

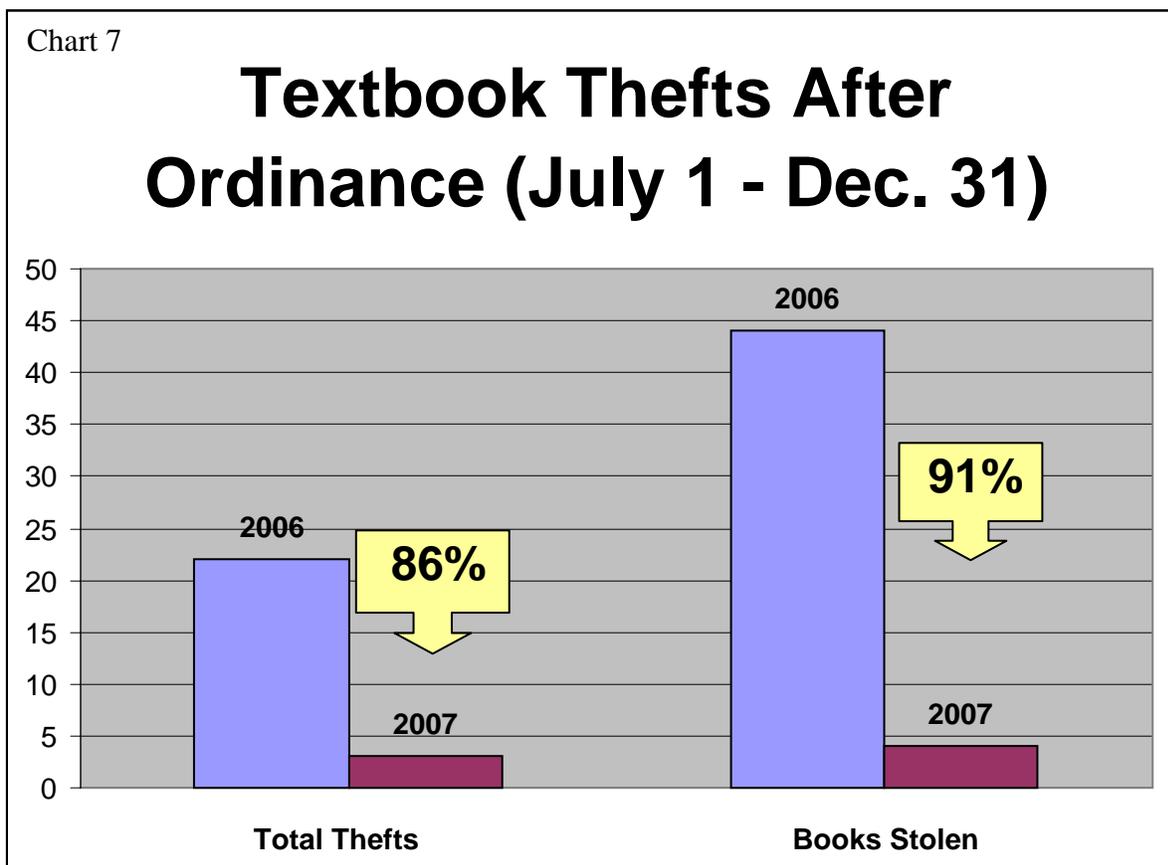
Officer Pearce evaluated the total textbook theft trends from 2006 to 2007 and noticed a 38% total reduction of textbook theft incidents and a 45% reduction in the number of books stolen. (chart 6)



In assessing the success of Madison’s Textbook Ordinance, Officer Pearce tracked data from July 1 (date ordinance took effect) until December 31, of 2007. Officer

Pearce compared this data to the same time period of the previous year and noticed an 86% decrease in textbook theft incidents and a 91% decrease in the actual number of textbooks stolen. (chart 7).

Though there were three textbook theft incidents that have occurred since the passage of the Madison Textbook Ordinance, further analysis of these cases indicated these textbooks were not specifically targeted for theft. As an example, a backpack containing an iPod and other electronics was stolen, and the backpack happened to contain a small outdated textbook. That textbook was not resold to any local book resellers.



One consideration was the data's validity. Officer Pearce believed there was a serious issue of under reporting textbook thefts prior to the project starting. The UW Madison

Police heard from many students who knew of friends who had their books stolen, but did not report it because they didn't have confidence anyone would ever be caught. Due to the enormous local media and student attention given to the textbook ordinance, the UW Police Department strongly believes students are more likely to report a textbook theft now than they would have been prior to the ordinance. Since greater reporting is likely now, Officer Pearce feels this only strengthens the rate reduction statistics.

Officer Pearce also considered the anticipatory benefit of the textbook ordinance. However, after reviewing the data, he determined that though there was a drop in the rate of textbook thefts for the 6 months leading up to the ordinance's effective date (likely attributed to other response efforts), the significant decrease did not occur until after the ordinance took effect.

Officer Pearce concluded that community perception on problem of textbook thefts is that it no longer exists. Police officers at the UW Police Department have a general feeling that the problem is non-existent, and the students no longer voice complaints to their respective building managers. Considering that there have been no targeted textbook thefts since the passage of the Textbook Ordinance, it is not hard to understand this public perception.

In February of 2008, Officer Pearce met with Madison City Council Alder, Eli Judge, to discuss the success of the textbook ordinance. Alder Judge, who is also a UW Madison student, informed Officer Pearce that for several months in late 2007 there was a boycott effort by UW students against the Underground Textbook Exchange. Alder

Judge informed Officer Pearce this effort was driven by numerous online student “blogs” in response to the owner of the “Underground” taking a public stance against the ordinance. Alder Judge said the general feeling of the UW students was this ordinance was going to make them and their books safer. Because of this “backlash” against the “Underground”, Alder Judge contacted their competitor, “The University Book Store” and discovered that “UBS” reported an abnormal spike in sales during this same time period, which illustrates the boycott’s effectiveness. Officer Pearce feels the presence of a boycott against a major opponent to the textbook ordinance, demonstrates the community’s confidence of the ordinance’s success.

In conclusion, Officer Pearce feels the education and target hardening efforts worked well to address the immediate concerns of the community, and the Textbook Ordinance will work to address the long term concerns of textbook theft. He is also confident the nature of the textbook ordinance works to level the playing field of textbook resellers to prevent displacement of the problem.

The assessment phase of this project will continue to ensure this problem doesn’t resurface in some other fashion. However, the UW Madison Police Department is fairly confident the root problem was addressed by reducing anonymity and removing the rewards for stealing textbooks. Madison’s Textbook Ordinance was the FIRST such ordinance in the country and has received the recognition of several national media outlets. The data clearly shows that writing this textbook ordinance worked better at addressing the problem of textbook thefts than previous “reactionary” policing methods. This only goes to prove that the pen IS mightier than the sword.

Textbook Theft Appendix Item # 1



News » Education

Colleges targeting book crooks

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Enlarge | By Doug Wojcik, The Stevens Point Journal for USA TODAY

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's bookstore sets up a display to show incoming freshmen and their parents the difference between buying and renting textbooks.

PRICEY TEXTS

A sampling of new college textbooks at campus bookstores:

Business Law and the Regulatory Environment: \$154

Quantitative Chemical Analysis: \$130

Fundamentals of Building Construction: \$110

Dynamics Of Leadership In Public Service: \$85

By Judy Keen, USA TODAY

CHICAGO — Colleges and universities are intensifying efforts to reduce the growing problem of textbook thefts by marking books with invisible ink, requiring used bookstores to keep logs of sellers and banning the resale of the expensive volumes by non-students.

Many textbooks now cost well over \$100 and are tempting targets for thieves who often can sell them for half the original price. The City Council in Madison, Wis., home to the University of Wisconsin, passed an ordinance this year requiring bookstores that buy used textbooks to keep detailed records on the sellers: physical descriptions and driver's license, Social Security or state ID numbers.

The ordinance, which took effect in July, was prompted by "a spike in the number of people who were selling the books to get money for drugs," campus police Detective Peter Grimyser says.

Sandi Torkildson, owner of A Room of One's Own, a bookstore four blocks from campus, objects to keeping the personal data for six months and sharing it with police at their request without search warrants. "It's an issue of readers' privacy," she says.

Most campus police don't keep statistics on textbook thefts, but James Howard, textbook manager at Oregon State University's campus bookstore, says thefts rise as prices increase. "We see a lot of stolen books," he says. "It's easy cash."

Mixx it
Other ways to share:
Digg
del.icio.us
Newsvine
Reddit
Facebook
What's this?

What campuses are doing:

- The University of Texas at Arlington helps students mark their textbooks with their names and other identifying information using ink that can be seen only under fluorescent lights. Campus bookstores check used books for the markings.

- When someone tries to resell a book at the Oregon State University bookstore, reports of stolen copies pop up on checkout screens. The store paid out \$1.5 million last year to buy back used textbooks.

- The University of Montana allows students to return textbooks only on a single day two weeks into each semester, and the bookstore requires sellers to present IDs, says Jim Lemcke, chief of public safety.

- At Penn State, campus and off-campus bookstores buy used textbooks and offer refunds only to those with student IDs.

Chicago's DePaul University has a similar policy. "If you come to turn in a book for cash, you have to be a DePaul student," says Mike Dohm, assistant director of public safety. "They won't even talk to you if you're not."

Madison hopes new rules will combat college textbook thieves

(Published Thursday, May 3, 2007 10:33:04 AM CST)

By Ryan J. Foley
Associated Press

A d v e r t i s e m e n t

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MADISON, Wis. - This college town will try new regulations to combat the growing national problem of textbook theft, hoping to deter and catch book thieves who sell them to bookstores to make quick cash.

The city council voted Tuesday to require people selling books to show identification and fill out a form listing each book's title and author. Stores will keep the information and share it with police to help find thieves and recover stolen books.

Universities and bookstores nationwide have taken steps in response to a spike in the theft of increasingly pricey textbooks, but two industry groups said they had heard of no other similar regulations.

The rules, which go into effect July 1, are similar to those requiring pawn shops to log their transactions to reduce the market for stolen electronics and jewelry.

"Books have become a new profit center for criminals," said city council member Zach Brandon, who recalled having \$300 worth of books stolen from his dorm room when he was a freshman at Kent State University in 1992. "It will be a deterrent."

But critics say the regulations may mean longer lines for University of Wisconsin students selling their books, will do little to stop criminals and could potentially allow authorities to snoop on students' reading habits.

One recent theft victim said she doubted regulations would solve the problem because too many students leave their books unattended.

"It seems that students simply need to be much more careful with their belongings," law student Cathleen Dettmann said in an e-mail. "Giving the thieves less opportunity to prey upon you is the best control."

A thief snatched Dettmann's laptop computer and a backpack with a constitutional law book and supplement that cost a combined \$141.50 while she was using a law school restroom. The semester has been difficult because she lost many notes and papers, she said.

The University Book Store recently helped police make two arrests in that case.

Former student Zach Miller and his girlfriend Tamara Case were charged last week with stealing textbooks and other belongings from academic buildings to support a heroin habit. They were arrested after Miller, 20, tried to sell books that police had previously warned the store were stolen.

Store President Pat McGowan said his store already documents 50,000 book buyback transactions per year and he praised the council for making other stores follow suit.

Troy Gerkey, co-owner of Underground Textbook Exchange, said the rules will have no impact on thieves who sell stolen books on the Internet and will force his store to hire workers and add technology to track the sales.

But he said the ordinance may help every six months or so when a ring of book thieves targets the area.

"It takes a week or two or three to catch on to them or get them arrested or quit buying their books," Gerkey said. "Maybe this ordinance will halt the problem altogether or speed up the process where we can weed them out."

Charlie Schmidt, spokesman for the National Association of College Stores, said bookstores are trying hard to limit shoplifting and the trade of stolen books. Many have cameras, require students to show IDs and keep databases to ensure those selling books were the original buyers, he said.

Both Schmidt and Sue Riedman, spokeswoman for the Used Textbook Association, said they were unaware of similar city regulations.

Sandi Torkildson, co-owner of A Room of One's Own, a feminist bookstore, said she has moved her expensive textbooks to near the checkout counter to stop theft.

But she said she's appalled the city will require her to record the books students sell because that could allow police to spy on reading habits.

The city should instead urge students to take more responsibility for their belongings, she said.

"I see students leave their books and computers and go to the bathroom in the back of my store all the time," she said.

"Prevention is actually a much better way of dealing with this than writing a law that will cause me extra paperwork and cost me money. It's a big law to cover a small problem."

NEWS

Textbook ordinance seemingly effective

by Cara Harshman

Thursday, February 28, 2008

The University of Wisconsin Police Department released statistics indicating a City Council ordinance passed seven months ago aimed at stemming textbook thefts was effective in the second half of 2007.

According to the report, 22 textbook thefts occurred on the UW campus between July 1 and Dec. 31 of 2006. In that same period in 2007, 3 textbook thefts occurred, an 86 percent decrease.

Assistant District Attorney Mike Verveer said in his experience as a prosecutor, he has tried a number of individuals for stealing textbooks everywhere from libraries to lockers at Grainger Hall.

"Many of the defendants were drug addicts and textbooks were an easy source of money to satisfy their habits because they could literally take the textbooks down State Street and walk out with cash in their hands," Verveer said.



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Related Stories:

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- [Selling books back may require ID](#) (January 19, 2007)
- [Theft suspects have day in court](#) (May 1, 2007)
- [Students hit by random thefts](#) (April 27, 2004)
- [Regents examine book prices](#) (December 4, 2007)

But since the textbook ordinance passed, "the number of cases that we've had referred to our office involving textbook thefts has dropped off to nothing," he added.

UWPD first recommended a textbook ordinance to the City Council and Ald. Eli Judge, District 8, inherited the ordinance from his predecessor Austin King when he took his seat on the City Council in April 2007.

Working with bookstore owners, students and city officials, Judge crafted an ordinance that Pat McGowan, president of the University Book Store, said, "truly cuts down on book theft."

"I think [the textbook ordinance] provides a very strong, visible deterrent to stealing a textbook," Judge said. "This ordinance says if you're going to do it, we're going to see you."

When the ordinance passed, the University Book Store was already in compliance with the ordinance, which requires students to show their identification when selling books back so police can track names if someone reports their books as stolen.

"From our standpoint, taking IDs is something we've always done," McGowan said. "I'm glad everyone is [checking IDs] now."

If a Madison textbook store, like the Underground Textbook Exchange, the University Book Store or Beat the Bookstore does not comply with the ordinance, they could lose their license, Judge said.

According to Judge, the early textbook ordinance days were met with a slew of complaints from people who said forcing students to show their ID would just be an added burden.

For McGowan, the benefits outweigh the costs.



University of Wisconsin – Madison
POLICE DEPARTMENT

1429 Monroe Street
Madison, WI 53711-2018

Chief Susan Riseling
Associate Vice Chancellor

Non-Emergency (608) 264-COPS
Fax (608) 262-9768

www.uwpd.wisc.edu

Emergency 911

Rob T. Guerette, Ph D
School of Criminal Justice
Florida International University
University Park PCA 366B
11200 SW 8th Street
Miami, FL 33199

March 11, 2008

Dear Dr. Guerette,

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Police Department proudly and respectfully nominates the "Textbook Thefts Project" for Goldstein Award consideration. For over fifteen years this agency has placed a premium on crime prevention and problem-solving as evidenced by our ongoing commitment to use community feedback, self-assessment and best practices to solve community problems. We encourage and support problem-solving, especially at the street and community officer level.

This project provides a wonderful example of what is possible when all the necessary components of problem-solving and the formal application of the SARA model are brought to bear on a community issue. We have supported Police Officer Erik Pearce in his problem-solving endeavor since its inception and we are proud to continue that support through the nomination process for this most prestigious honor.

Sincerely,

Susan Riseling
Chief of Police
Associate Vice Chancellor