

Combining Electronic Class Registration and Textbook Ordering

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Abstract

The University of Georgia determined that the process of electronic registration by its students for each semester's class schedule could be enhanced by connecting the computer data base of the Registrar's Office to the text book data base of the Bookstore. This would enable the student body to choose their required text selections at the same time that they completed the registration process.

Bookstore management provided a software program of inventory availability to the University Registrar's Office; and working with representatives of each organization's software designers, a compatible interface was created. This has allowed the data base of the text book inventory to display to the registering student the exact match for his or her class choice as identified by the teaching instructor, via their adoption orders. The student has the option to order the text book requirement for each class in either new or used edition, and have the books either delivered or made available for pick up at the Bookstore.

This process allows immediate selection of the choice used or new book inventory, and saves the shopping trip and hassle of travel to the bookstore in the busiest traffic, searching for the right selection of books, and waiting in line for check out. The Bookstore takes the incoming order electronically, picks the books off the shelf per the direction of the student, and packages each order for the individual for easy one stop pick up, or direct delivery.

Introduction of the Organization

The University of Georgia, a land-grant and sea-grant university with state-wide commitments and responsibilities is the state's flagship institution of higher education. It is also the state's oldest, most comprehensive and most diversified institution of higher education. Our motto, "to teach, to serve and to inquire into the nature of things," reflects the university's integral and unique role in the conservation and enhancement of the state's and nation's intellectual, cultural and environmental heritage. One of the specific commitments made by the University is to provide excellence in a teaching/learning environment dedicated to serve a diverse and well-prepared student body, to promote high levels of student achievement and to provide appropriate academic support services.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

The University of Georgia has recently completed its first academic school year of utilizing the Follett higher Education Group's Booknow Program. Booknow is a registration integration program, one that ties the University's online registration system to www.ugabookstore.com and allows students to register for their courses and purchase their related textbooks in one online session. In addition, should a student choose to not purchase their textbooks at the time of registration, they can still go back later to the registration system and search for their book list and either purchase online at the Bookstore's site or use it as a reference to search for books elsewhere.

Design

The Follett Higher Education Group is responsible for the software development of the Booknow Program. The tasks related to setting it up were minimal from the University's standpoint. Some programming was needed to integrate the system into the University's registration system. This however, was minimal and easily done. Only one programmer from the University's Registrar's Office was involved. There were no other expenses incurred to initiate the program. Timing is the only issue as the system should be set up and tested prior to the first involved semester's book rush.

Benefits

Feedback from students and sales results have demonstrated the Booknow Program has been very helpful to students. Online textbook sales have grown at a faster rate than in-store sales and all employees at the bookstore have seen countless class registration receipts that include book lists. To gauge the effectiveness of the program, a customer survey was initiated during the previous semester. In order to solicit opinions, students filling out the survey were entered into a raffle for an Ipod Nano. More than 300 students responded and it was found that the system was easy to use, informative, and would be used again in the future for textbook purchases. The University and the Bookstore were both very pleased with the positive responses received from the student customers. It is very apparent that Booknow has been a positive upgrade to the services provided by the University. The Bookstore will continue to solicit customer satisfaction as well as find

ways to make the overall Bookstore experience more customer friendly. The Bookstore will be increasing awareness of the program by including relevant information in its new student orientation sessions held during the summer.

Retrospect

The greatest challenge with Booknow is the timeliness of book orders given to the Bookstore by faculty. The UGA Bookstore devotes much time and resources to acquiring book orders from faculty members and will continue to develop innovative solutions for this issue. One approach to this has been the development of an enhancement to the program which is called Booklater. It is a process for students who access Booknow to search for their book information or purchase books and the Bookstore does not have information, can sign up for an email update when information is received pertaining to the books that they will need. This will keep students from constantly checking for updates and will allow them to purchase their books by clicking a link enclosed on their email notification. This enhancement will hopefully keep students informed and also increase online textbook sales at the UGA Bookstore.

One additional problem encountered was the increased salary costs associated with the implementation of the system. Salary costs increased slightly during book rush due to the fact that employees were picking the on-line book orders and then ringing the transaction up in the cash register. Part of this problem has been alleviated through the fact that the transactions are now processed through the Follet Group's central office. The office is notified electronically that the order has been filled and then it is processed for payment using a secure credit card transaction system. The salary costs have risen

but the slight increase has provided a better customer service experience. It is more than justified.