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<https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2014/10/09/354647112/how-college-students-battled-textbook-publishers-to-a-draw-in-3-graphs>

How College Students Battled Textbook Publishers To A Draw, In 3 Graphs

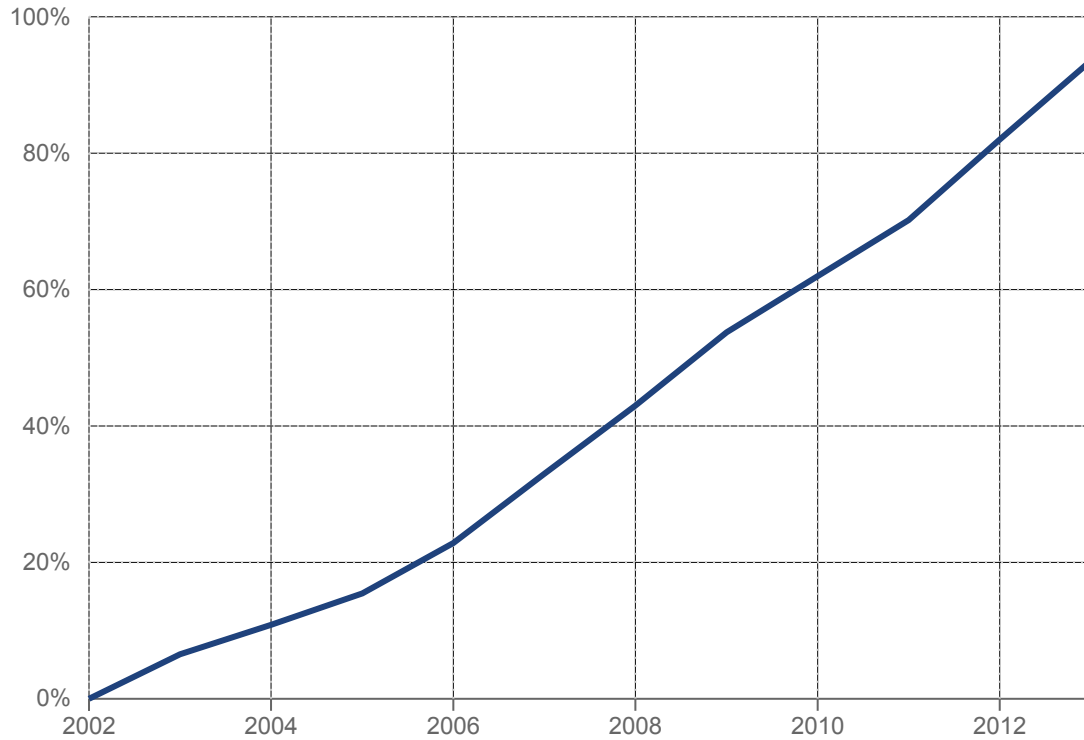
by **DAVID KESTENBAUM**

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College textbooks are expensive. You probably already know this. A new biology or economics book can cost \$300.

And prices have been soaring, doubling over the past decade, growing faster than the price of housing, cars, even healthcare.

Change In The Price Of New Textbooks, Since 2002



Source: Bureau Of Labor Statistics

Credit: Quoc Trung Bui/NPR

But, surprisingly, the amount students actually spend on textbooks has not been rising. In fact the best data we could find on this shows students have been spending a bit less over time.

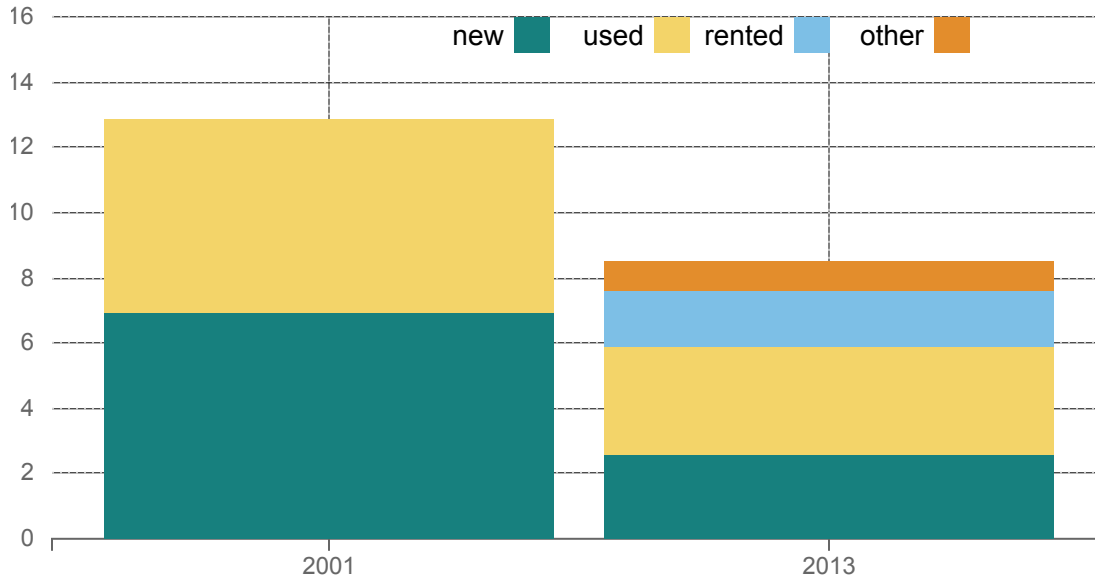
Average Amount Students Spend On Textbooks, By Year



Source: Student Monitor
Credit: Quoc Trung Bui/NPR

How is this possible? Well when prices go up, people usually try to find ways to avoid paying those higher prices. That seems to be what is going on here. The spread of the Internet has made it easier for students to find used textbooks in faraway places. Textbook rental has become a thing. Some students can now buy e-textbooks, which tend to be cheaper than print books. Others are borrowing books or going without.

Average Number Of Textbook Students Buy



Source: Student Monitor
Credit: Quoc Trung Bui/NPR

That last chart actually helps explain the first one showing prices for new books going through the roof. If you're a textbook publisher selling fewer books every year, how do you cover your costs? One way is to raise the price for the new editions. Of course, this encourages students to buy even fewer. A former textbook salesman I talked to called it the "spiral of destruction".