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eText that Empowers Affordability and Achievement

A Corporate Sponsored Webinar



Q&A from the Live Webinar Session

The following questions were submitted during a live webinar session presented May 5, 2016 by Inside Higher Education and Sponsored by Pearson. Answers are provided by Dr. Anastasia (Stacy) Morrone, Associate Vice President of Learning Technologies at Indiana University.

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Q: Within the digital course materials delivery model leveraged by Indiana University, are faculty able to select materials from *any* publisher?

A: Indiana University's eText Initiative is an opt-in model that leverages content from multiple publishers who have entered into an agreement with IU, as well as faculty-authored and other non-proprietary content. IU continues to seek out new publisher partners and to make their catalog available through the initiative.

Q: How long do students have access to digital course materials delivered through this model? Is it just for the duration of the course? What if a student wants to be able to refer back to the content for future courses or even after they leave the university?

A: Students retain access to traditional eTexts for as long as they're enrolled at Indiana University. While students may choose to print all or part of an eText, or order a discounted loose-leaf paper copy, access to the eText itself is removed once the student leaves the university. Access to digital learning materials—for example, Pearson's MyFinanceLab and other similar online learning/homework solutions—are usually limited to access only for the duration of the course in which they are utilized.

Q: When a book is delivered digitally and then the book is later updated, will the updated version be available to those who had access to the prior version?

A: When an instructor selects an eText, it's provided as a unique piece of instructional material that is also specific to the course for which it's selected. The student will not have access to the updated version of the eText unless they enroll in another course that utilizes this updated version.

Q: How do you support students who do not own the technology required to access required materials that are delivered digitally?

A: At Indiana University, we've found that it is actually a very small percentage of students who do not own a device they can use to access digital content. However, for those students who do not own the required technology, we make technology resources available for students to use on campus.

Q: Faculty can opt in or out of digital delivery, but what if a student wants to use digital materials and their instructor has *not* opted in? Can they get access to digital materials on their own?

A: Pending any specific requirement from the instructor, students are free to access other digital versions of the text (for example, renting or buying a digital edition of the course text through the campus bookstore, commercial outlets, etc.).

Q: Have there been any differences in acceptance rates of digital course materials based on student population demographics?

A: Based on historical data, there has been no significant difference based on gender. In regard to class standing, acceptance is higher in upper division courses. Acceptance rates are also higher for students who have previously used an eText compared to those who have not.

Q: What have been the biggest motivators for faculty to opt into the eText Initiative—reduced student cost, enriched learning experience, day-one access, etc.?

A: The Indiana University eText Initiative provides students a significant discount on the cost of their textbook, and many faculty are aware of/want to pass on this cost savings to their students. Beyond cost savings, however, the ability to interact with students directly within the eText, gather learner analytic data on student engagement with the eText, and the assurance that all students will have access to the same version of the eText on the first day of class are all compelling factors that motivate faculty to chose eTexts for their courses.

Q: Are textbook requisitions still handled through the bookstore?

A: Traditional printed textbook requisitions are still placed and managed through the Barnes and Noble bookstore on all IU campuses.

Q: How is ADA compliance and accessibility managed for eTexts?

A: The highest volume of ADA related eText accommodations we receive is to support sighted, print-impaired students (those with learning disabilities, mobility impairments, etc.). IU primarily uses TextHELP Read & Write Gold and Kurzweil 3000 reading assistance programs to serve these students. We determine if the eText platform works natively with these reading programs. If the platform is not compatible, then we request an electronic copy of the eText (usually a PDF) and convert and enhance the format of the eText as needed to ensure a quality learning experience for the student.

IU converts eTexts for visually impaired students into the format that best fits the needs of the student and the subject matter (MS Word, braille, tactile diagrams, EPUB, DAISY, etc.). If the eText platform offers any interactive features, then we evaluate the accessibility of the platform and then support the student and instructor regarding any necessary special instructions for workarounds or accommodations.

Often, requests for electronic copies of eTexts that we can process to accommodate a student with disabilities are fulfilled by the eText platform vendor within one business day.

Q: Once faculty have opted in and selected an eText, is purchase by the student voluntary or can they opt out?

A: Prior to July 1, 2016, all students who registered for a course where the instructor has selected an IU eText were required to pay a mandatory eText fee. After July 1, 2016—and based on new federal regulations imposed by the Department of Education—all students will have the option to opt out of the eText requirement, if (1) the exact same materials are legally available outside of the IU eText Initiative and (2) the student submits their opt-out request no later than 45 days prior to the first day of class of the upcoming term.

Q: Working with so many different publishers, have you been able to get a unified and consistent EULA and/or terms of use or do they vary by publisher?

A: Contractual terms are generally the same across all publishers (e.g., allowing for access of the eText across multiple devices, allowing for students to print up to a specific number of pages—for any single print job—from the eText, and agreeing to provide a separate digital version of the eText to the university’s Assistive Technology and Accessibility Center so the text can be made accessible through screen readers and other related technologies).

Q: You described the initial pilot as “institution pay;” is the initiative now “student pay?”

A: The current model for the IU eText Initiative is that all students who enroll in a course that utilizes an eText pay for the cost of the eText itself, as well as a small fee that covers the use of the eText reader platform (at IU, that platform is Unizin Engage).

Q: Is this model leveraged for any online courses?

A: There is no difference in the eText model based on the course modality. If the instructor selects an eText through the IU eText Initiative, online students pay the same fee for the eText and reader platform and enjoy the same benefits as students taking a

traditional face-to-face course. The Unizin Engage eText reader platform displays and functions well across a range of devices, including Windows and Mac, as well as OS and Android devices.

Q: How do you work with publishers to manage your book list and ensure you have the latest ISBNs?

A: Our eText business analyst (full-time position) works with the publishers prior to the start of the ordering period for the forthcoming term to ensure we have the correct metadata for each offered title. This metadata is in turn loaded into the university's eText portal (where faculty go to search for/place their order for the eTexts and digital learning materials they'd like to use for their upcoming course). Faculty may also make special requests for ISBNs directly to the publisher.

Q: Do faculty have the ability to give students the option of using digital or print materials?

A: When students enroll in a course that utilizes an IU eText, they also have the option to order (for a modest additional fee) a black and white printed version of the text (typically in three-ring binder format). Students may also print directly from the eText, through the eText reader platform, typically up to 50 pages per print job. Prior to July 1, 2016, and regardless of whether or not students utilize the eText itself, they pay for the eText. However, after July 1 (and the implementation of new federal regulations), students will have the choice to "opt out" of the eText requirement for any course in which they enroll and where the instructor has selected to use an IU eText.

Q: Does the delivery of eTexts integrate with your LMS?

A: Students access the Unizin Engage eText reader platform directly through the LMS (at IU, this will be exclusively Canvas as of fall 2016). When students log in (via Canvas) to a course that utilizes an eText, they see a link to the eText reader in the course navigation bar. Clicking on that link opens the eText reader platform where they see the eText(s) for that specific course as well as all previous eTexts from past courses to which they still have access. Also, utilizing the ability in Canvas to "deep link," instructors can link from the eText to specific tools/content in Canvas. For example, on a specific page of the eText, instructors may wish to link to related content within a course discussion forum in the Canvas course site.

Q: Are student fees paid per eText or per course? For example, if a student is enrolled in two different courses that leverage eTexts, will they pay two fees?

A: Students pay for each eText they utilize for each course in which they enroll that utilizes an eText. However, if a student were to take more than one course that utilizes the same eText, they are only charged once for that eText.

Q: I use Pearson's MyFinanceLab which has an available eText; is this the type of eText being used in this initiative?

A: Some digital learning tools such as MyFinanceLab also include an integrated eText component. Depending on their instructional approach, some instructors may wish to utilize this integrated eText or they may require that students purchase the separate eText so that students can access/take advantage of other features available when reading an eText on the Unizin Engage reader platform. Also, as a separate eText, students will retain access to the eText for as long as they're enrolled at IU, whereas access to a digital learning tool is typically limited to the semester in which the course is offered. For those digital learning tools that include an integrated eText, instructors may also opt to utilize the digital learning tool in combination with a printed textbook.

Q: How will the eText Initiative address the US DOE ground rules on opt-out?

A: As of July 1, 2016 students will have the choice to opt out of the eText requirement for any course in which they enroll that utilizes an eText. However, as a condition of opting out, students will still be required to purchase the same edition of the eText and must place their request to opt out no later than 45 days prior to the start of the term. Students will also be told that, should they choose to opt out of the eText requirement for a specific course, the instructor of that course will be notified of their decision. Since the implementation of the IU eText Initiative, students have voiced little concern about the eText requirement. This, combined with the growing number of IU courses that utilize an eText, furthers the belief that after July 1, 2016, few students will choose to opt out.

Q: How much on average do students pay for eTexts?

A: Given the range of materials available through the Indiana University eText Initiative, it is difficult to determine an average price. Publisher discounts (on texts) are 50-80%

off print list price. Typical digital learning tools, (online learning/homework solutions) are discounted 25% off list price.

Q: Are there specific tablets or e-reader devices that you recommend to your students?

A: There are no specific devices that are recommended. However, if students wish to read their IU eTexts “offline,” they must utilize the Google Chrome browser (therefore, if they wish to read offline, the device must support Chrome). Also, it is important to note that when instructors select an eText from the IU eText Initiative, access to that eText is restricted to any device on which students can access the Canvas LMS and therefore access the Unizin Engage eText reader platform (i.e., commercial e-readers like a Kindle will not work).

Q: It’s uncommon to build fees into courses for printed textbooks; what’s the rationale for doing this with digital materials?

A: There are several advantages to including digital fees as part of a course. When students view the schedule of classes for the upcoming term, they can see which courses utilize an eText and what the cost of that eText will be, therefore allowing them an earlier, better sense of the total cost of the course. Also, since the digital materials are part of the actual course fee, they can be covered directly through any financial aid the student may be receiving. This is important as the student doesn’t need to wait for a financial aid check to arrive (sometimes not until after classes have started) to purchase their textbooks; they have them on the first day of class.