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Are e-Books the flicker of the future?

--by Connie Buller, Metropolitan CC, with permission of Houghton Mifflin College Market Research, noting that no more comprehensive data is available about the results of the study.

Textbooks, traditionally touchable and printed on paper, are moving onto the Web. Software accompanying textbooks often connect students to paragraphs of the actual book via links, and it is also possible to purchase e-Books at a fraction of the cost of a regular textbook.

Houghton Mifflin College Market Research Surveyed more than 5000 professors from a wide variety of colleges, from 8 disciplines, including math. No group had fewer than 400 responses. ¼ were from 2-year schools, with the rest from 4-year schools (they didn't try for this—it was just which teachers chose to respond). Most of the math and English instructors who responded came from 2-year schools. Of those who have used e-Books, 2 out of 3 had a positive experience. Reading from a screen and access to computers were considered to be drawbacks. Links to multi-media resources, and cost savings were cited as the biggest advantages.

However, the conclusion of the Nov., 2005 Houghton Mifflin College Market Research was “[And of Greatest Interest: Most instructors did not agree that e-Books would eventually replace printed textbooks.](#)”

Ed. Note: Students with certain disabilities related to computer or TV screens might be impacted by e-books— Connie Buller
http://preventdisease.com/news/articles/brain_sees_screen_flickers.shtml

NEBMATYC Newsletter Volume 2005-6: 1

An Occasional Newsletter, Volume 2005-6: 2
January 13, 2006
Editor, Connie Buller, Metropolitan CC, Omaha
To join, click on [Nebraska Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges](#)

Let's celebrate our own! Nominations due February 14 for Teaching Excellence



Award.

For form, click on [Nebraska Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges](#)

[Avoid Burn-out!](#) --article inside by
NEBMATYC 2005 Teaching Excellence
Award winner John Block

Pete Wildman elected Central Region Vice President of AMATYC

Pete Wildman, NEBMATYC member from Caspar College, Wyoming, was installed at the national AMATYC meeting in San Diego as new Vice President of our Central Region. Many of us met Pete at the 2005 conference in Kearney, NE. He says he is planning to attend our Spring Conference, Friday, April 7, 2006 in North Platte. We welcome Pete, and are delighted with his new appointment! He takes over from Wanda Long, NEBMATYC member from St. Charles, Missouri (she also joined when she came to Kearney ☺).

[Accreditation help from AMATYC: Beyond Crossroads](#) has some good ways to get at course and curriculum assessment. NEBMATYC has been asked to join other affiliates in endorsing this document (and we can use it anyway) (available at www.amatyc.org).

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. Avoid burn-out—I talk less and students work more. ---John

Block, North Platte CC, recipient of 2005 NEBMATYC Teaching Excellence Award

After searching for ways to make the time go faster and avoid burn-out, I have come up with the following. I often write worksheets (1 to 4 pages, for instance) of the skills or concepts of that class time. Usually these are just exercises practicing the skill we are to go over. Sometimes the sheets contain examples, too. Sometimes I use the sheet to introduce the topic by throwing out a question like, "how do you do a problem like the first one on the sheet I just gave you?" In any case, after the shortest possible explanation, I have them start working on the problems with an "Okay, you try it on the first row of your worksheet." I let them compare their answers with other students, and we return to the board soon for questions. Then we go on to the next row, or even the whole worksheet. My goal is for me to talk less, and the students to work more. By the time I send them home with an assignment, they've already done 20 to 50 problems in class, and have a written record of their own work. Better notes, better examples. It does take a little bit more prep, but then again the worksheets are available again next semester. This is also a good way to review: start the period with a half hour worksheet of problems from the last several weeks. I say, "hey, let's warm up." and hand them a page or two to work. It throws their brains into gear right away, and gets them back to the level where they are ready to go on with the new stuff. Probably this is just new to me, but maybe not.



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News from your college? Issues to discuss? Ideas or reflections?

Email cbuller@mcneb.edu (any e-mails may be published ☺) or telephone Connie Buller at 1-800-228-9553 x 1356

Upcoming Conferences:

- Friday, April 7, 2006 NEBMATYC at North Platte Community College.

Conference Coordinator: Debi Martin

Presentations solicited—send proposals to Connie Buller at cbuller@mcneb.edu

- November 2-5 AMATYC at Cincinnati

Presentation proposals due: Feb. 1, 2006
www.amatyc.org for form and submission
(Consider doing your first presentation at NEBMATYC in North Platte ☺)

Reader Reflections

Subject: Long Division

Interestingly enough, almost of my GED students have a good idea of how to do long division. I have noticed that they don't draw the line between their "results" as they go, and they don't handle zeros very efficiently when either multiplying or dividing. They went to elementary schools in Mexico.

Carl Spencer, Farmington, NM

Subject: E-Books

I think a number of our students might enjoy carrying around a notebook computer with e-books rather than the heavy backpacks.

Mike Flesch, Metropolitan CC

NEBMATYC regional: North Platte
NE Friday, April 8, 2006

Round Table Discussion of College Algebra
–Frank Weidenfeller, MCC



Survey still open:

If you do this, please send to fweidenfeller@mccneb.edu He has already received this from many of you late last spring, and will use this as the basis of the roundtable at NEBMATYC

My name is Frank Weidenfeller. I teach at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha. I am asking you to take this survey to find out your feelings about the College Algebra course. The survey is completely anonymous and hopefully will only take you about 10 minutes. Students across the country seem to be achieving poorly in this course. I would like to find out what the teachers of the this course think as to the causes of this. I would like to give you the results of the survey at the Nebmatyc conference in 2006. The survey is divided into three parts: readiness, content and assessment. You can e-mail your responses back to me. Thank-you in advance for your time and trouble.

Readiness

- 1) Rank in order of importance with 1 being the most important, the reasons you find that students do so poorly in College Algebra. Put the ranking in front of the letter. If two or more are of equal importance place the same number in front of all.
 - a) Not properly prepared by the previous classes
 - b) Too much time has elapsed between this class and the prerequisite classes
 - c) Too much material to cover but not enough time
 - d) Attendance problems
 - e) Not enough effort put forth by the student in doing homework and studying
 - f) The content of the course is difficult
 - g) The student was placed incorrectly

- 2) Which skills do you think are the weakest in the student as they enter the class. Mark all that apply.
 - a) Factoring
 - b) Solving linear equations
 - c) Solving fractional equations
 - d) Solving radical equations
 - e) The quadratic formula
 - f) Solving linear inequalities
 - g) Simplifying fractional expressions
 - h) Simplifying radicals

- i) Working with imaginary numbers
- j) Plotting points in two dimensions
- k) Graphing lines
- l) Solving two variable systems of equations
- m) Solving application problems with one variable
- n) Solving application problems with two variables
- o) Other

Content

- 1) Which topics do you find are the most difficult for the student. Choose 5 and list them in order from most difficult to least with 1 being the most difficult and if two or more are the same give them the same number.
 - a) The domain and range of a function
 - b) Operations on functions
 - c) The inverse function
 - d) Sketching functions
 - e) Solving reducible equations
 - f) Solving quadratic and rational inequalities
 - g) Graphing conic sections
 - h) Completing the square with conic sections
 - i) Solving polynomial equations
 - j) Graphing polynomial functions
 - k) Asymptotes
 - l) Graphing rational functions
 - m) Graphing exponential functions
 - n) Graphing logarithmic functions
 - o) Understanding what a logarithm is
 - p) Manipulating logarithms by using their properties
 - q) Solving application problems involving exponential functions
 - r) Solving application problems involving logarithmic functions
 - s) Solving two variable system of equations
 - t) Solving three variable systems of equations
 - u) Using matrices to solve systems of equations
 - v) Performing matrix operations
 - w) Other

- 2) What concepts do you think are the most difficult for the student to learn. Rank in the order from most important to least with the most important given 1 and if two or more are of the same importance give them the same number.
 - a) Functions

- b) Solving polynomial equations
- c) Conic sections
- d) Logarithm and exponential functions
- e) Systems of equations

Assessment

- 1) What tools do you use in assessing student performance? Mark all which apply.
- a) Tests
 - b) Quizzes
 - c) Homework
 - d) Daily work
 - e) Notebook
 - f) Attendance
 - g) Portfolios
 - h) Projects
- 2) In grading student work where do you find most of the mistakes. Rank in order of frequency with 1 being the most frequent. If two have the same frequency give them the same number.
- a) Arithmetic
 - b) Basic algebra
 - c) Material from previously taught chapters in College Algebra
 - d) Lack of knowledge from Geometry
 - e) Not reading directions thoroughly
 - f) Not understanding what is being asked in a application problem

In conclusion, what methods do you think would work best to combat the readiness problem? Rank the following in order where 1 would be the most helpful .

- a) A re-evaluation of prerequisite algebra classes
- b) Modules offered over previous “learned” material
- c) Students auditing previous algebra classes
- d) Mandatory time spent in the math lab
- e) Computer assignments drilling on necessary skills