

E-textbooks may usher lower costs, improved learning for college students

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(PhysOrg.com) -- An e-textbook pilot program will be tested in the coming months as Ball State University examines methods to reduce the cost of attending college and increase learning efficiency.

Ball State's Office of Information Technology has entered into a yearlong pilot agreement with content publisher Flat World Knowledge and distributors Courseload and Barnes & Noble. The pilot project will introduce e-textbooks in select courses across disciplines throughout campus, allowing students to access content through readers or computers.

E-textbooks can cost up to 60 percent less than printed textbooks, said Yasemin Tunc, senior director of new [learning](#) technologies.

"Today's students have grown up with various types of tablets, e-readers and laptops, so they are familiar with this type of reading and learning environment," she said. "These students are better known as digital natives because technology is second nature to them. So, why not provide them with a better means of obtaining content?"

During the pilot study, faculty may use content from Flat World or continue their current textbooks. Students will be able to access them through Courseload reader or via Barnes & Noble's Nook Study. Both readers provide students with annotation and highlighting tools to assist with studying.

Courseload is browser based, with content residing in the cloud. The benefit to this approach is that tags and annotations can be shared with instructor and classmates. Nook Study is a Mac and Windows compatible reading platform, which users will download. The benefit of this approach is that the student doesn't have to be connected to the Internet when studying, Tunc said.

At the end of the [pilot program](#), results from surveys of faculty and [students](#) will allow the university to select e-textbook providers and readers for classes throughout campus.

"By using cloud technologies and social learning environments, Ball State will be at the forefront of digital education and will be able to keep college at an affordable price," Tunc said.

Provided by Ball State University

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