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Ogden company reaps the rewards of booming textbook-rental industry

By Keith McCord

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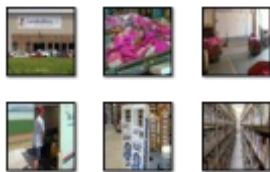
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sending them back.

The "return rush" started about two weeks ago and will continue for several more. Employees unpack the books, make repairs if necessary, re-label them with a new inventory number, and get them back on the shelves to be ready for orders for the fall semester.

OGDEN — Classes are wrapping up at colleges and universities across the nation for the traditional summer break, and that means it's an extremely busy time for a company in Ogden.

Multiple times a day, a postal truck arrives makes the trip out to the Campus Book Rentals headquarters, at [2805 S 1900 West](#) in Ogden, to dump off a load of college textbooks — about 3,000 at a time.

"He'll probably be by here five or six times today," said Kevin Martin. "We'll be north of 15,000 books today."

Martin is the chief operating officer of [Campus Book Rentals](#), where things are really hopping right now. With college classes ending around the country, students who have rented textbooks are now

By the numbers ...

- 59 percent of college students by current editions (new or used) of assigned textbooks.
- 14 percent of college students rent their assigned textbooks.
- Illicit acquisition activity is significant:
 - 25 percent of college students are downloading course materials from unauthorized websites
 - 20 percent of college students admit to photocopying chapters of textbooks

Source: *Book Industry Study Group*

"We were in a 4,500-square-foot warehouse three years ago," Martin said. "So, now we're 120 employees strong, (in a) 57,000-square-foot warehouse, and still growing like crazy."

The company is growing because students are saving a bundle by renting. Depending on the title, cost savings are anywhere from 50 percent to 90 percent of retail value.

The textbook rental business has also gotten more competitive since 2009. There are a number of companies in the nation now doing it, and Martin says his operation is probably one of the top three.

Still, only about 20 percent of the books used in higher education classes are rented, so there's a huge opportunity for growth.

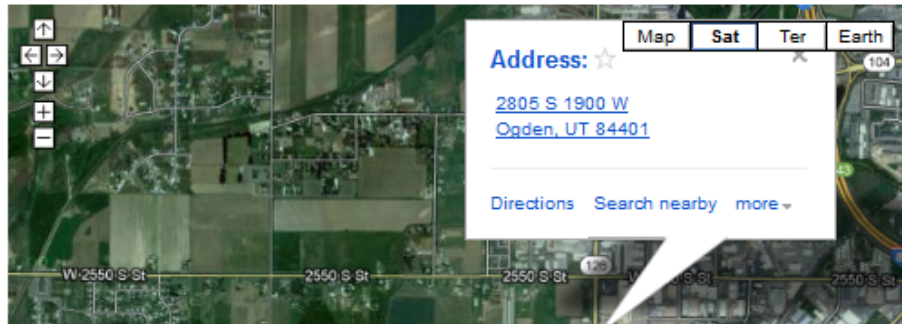
"These shelves, it's kind of like the balloon affect," Martin said. "These things get full — massively full — then when August hits they just empty right out."

Campus Book Rentals has 4 million titles available, and the one rented out the most, Martin says, is "Campbell's Biology."

The company knows digital books will play a role in the future, and Martin says they'll be ready. But traditional textbooks are going to be around for a while.

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—Kevin Martin, Campus Book Rentals



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