

Proposal #1:

A. interest seems good 20/20

B. Research questions 10/20

Seems OK but don't we already know the answer to these questions: of course Amazon etc will be cheaper than bricks & mortar store such as campus bookstore. Refine this part into a better research question that will really add to our knowledge about textbook costs for students.

C. references fine 10/10

I will be curious here whether your "target population" turns out to be studnets, or books. Both are interesting possibilities and lead to different research questions, different modes of data collection, etc.

Proposal #2:

A. interest seems fine 20/20

B. research questions 15/20

these are interesting questions but I think that you would need rather different surveys to answer all of them. (e.g. parking meter repair vs student behaviors). Also, regarding student "cheating" on avoiding parking fees, how will you know if they answer truthfully (not impossible, but needs more thinking). Please revise/refine/focus this part for I2

C. references fine 10/10

TOTAL 85./100

Research Proposal: Are we paying too much for textbooks?

Team members: Shu Wang, Yijia Zhou, Silvia Manolache, Nicholas Thieme

A.

Every beginning of a semester, each student has to spend a lot of money purchasing textbooks. Especially when we need the book immediately and buy it in the university bookstore, it costs a greater amount of money. Therefore, our survey needed to be done now to help students find a better place to buy textbooks and to save money.

B.

The primary question we propose to study is how much more expensive to buy books in our university bookstore than on Amazon, rental websites, etc. We also want to find out whether the price differences differ for books from various departments, course levels, hardcover/softcover, etc. Thus we can decide which books are OK to get from the bookstore, which are not.

C.

Several researches have been done on similar topic.

(1)

Book Overcharging article

http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2006-11-25/news/COLLEGEBOOKS25_1_overcharged-follett-college-students

Pedro Ruz Gutierrez

November 26th 2006

Orlando Sentinel

Two Daytona Beach Community College Students sued their college as well as book provider for 5 million dollars because of overcharging on book sales as well as underpayment on book buy backs. This demonstrates that the concept of book overcharging for profit does exist, and is a topic that is worth exploring for current students.

(By Nicholas Thieme)

(2)

Affordability of College Textbook

<http://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2007-116.pdf>

The survey focused on University of California, CSU and California Community Colleges. Regarding the fact that textbook prices have increased tremendously that outpaced median household income. The result of the survey shows that a potential cost saving can be up to 32 percent if purchasing through a third party rather than through the campus bookstore, and campus bookstores have inconsistent strategies over buyback price of used textbooks that only 4 out of 9 stores implements around 50% buyback price of the initial price of the textbook.

(By Yijia Zhou)

(3)

An Investigation of the Rising Costs of Textbooks

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/files/SPOTextbookBackground.pdf>

- The report contains figures on the annual increase in textbook and tuition for college students as well as investigating the factors that lead to the (drastic) increase in prices year after year. Also suggests solutions such as electronic textbooks, laws to control prices, and open access textbooks. This research is useful because we may ask questions relating to what students think is a viable alternative to purchasing books at the CMU Bookstore.

(By Silvia Manolache)

(4)

How Much Will Students Really Save Using Amazon's E-Textbooks?

<http://moneyland.time.com/2011/07/21/how-much-will-students-really-save-using-amazons-e-textbooks/>

Kayla Webley

July 21, 2011

In this article, the author talked about that Amazon is offering e-textbook rentals, which can reduce as much as 80% off textbook prices. Moreover, the e-book can be read not only on the kindle, but also on smartphones and tablets run on various operating systems.

(By Shu Wang)

Project Proposal for Parking

Team members: Shu Wang, Yijia Zhou, Silvia Manolache, Nicholas Thieme

A.

The city of Pittsburgh has recently increased the rates at the parking meters on Frew and Tech Streets. They have also increased the hours at which the meters must be paid until 10pm on all days except Sunday. However, this has created a lot of problems for the users of these spaces – the students, staff, and faculty at CMU. We want to implement a survey in order to understand what the effect of this policy on the community at CMU. It is possible that there are better, more efficient ways for the parking on Frew and Tech Streets to be handled, either by CMU or by the city of Pittsburgh. For instance, if nobody parks behind on these streets any longer, the city loses revenue instead of gaining revenue as expected.

B.

Some of the questions we propose to study are:

Whether the parking system as it currently stands is efficient for students, as well as for the Port Authority.

Whether students respond truthfully when asked about avoiding payment for parking at CMU

Whether the parking meters at CMU are repaired regularly when broken.

C.

A good bit of research, from parking rates and meter use to consumer perceptions of parking, has been done. The research on this topic is presented below:

(1)

Financial Analysis of Parking Assets of the Public Parking Authority of Pittsburgh-

<http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/council/assets/parkingassets/meterstudy.pdf>

This contains a range of details about parking in Pittsburgh, including comparisons of its meter costs with other US cities, graphs of peak times that meters are used, and historical revenues due to parking. It could be used to suggest price ranges that may seem fair to our sample, and to compare the use of meters now with previous meter use.

(By Silvia Manolache)

(2)

Parking Research

http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/council/assets/parkingassets/Final_Report_Sept_22.pdf

Finance Scholars Group

September 24th 2010

This is a report regarding monetizing Pittsburgh's parking assets completed by a professional finance consulting firm. It describes a number of different ways to

increase revenues from parking. This is a relevant document as it describes a number of different methods that are currently being used in Pittsburgh, as well as methods which could be implemented but are not that may potentially make the parking system more efficient

(By Nicholas Thieme)

(3)

On-Street Parking Meter Behavior

<http://141.213.232.243/bitstream/2027.42/64/2/74189.0001.001.pdf>

The study included both an analysis of historical data and a survey of selected on-street parking meter sites in Ann Arbor area, and the objective of the study is to examine the questions of parking behavior, trying to understand the violation conditions and law enforcement results. The studies found that 1/3 of parking vehicles violate meter regulation while only 5.9 % was issued a citation.

(By Yijia Zhou)

(4)

University Parking Survey

<http://facweb.knowlton.ohio-state.edu/jevanscowley/crp852/survey.pdf>

In this survey, the University District randomly asked residents their household's parking habits, work and commute characteristics, parking problems and improvements they would like to see so that they could determine the current parking situation and improve it in the future. They found that the most frequent improvements noted are: improved safety, more parking lots, more parking spaces and improved transit.

(By Shu Wang)