

Opinion

Exchange rates shouldn't dictate value of texts

Two weeks ago, I wrote about Texas public school textbooks being sent to the shredder after they had reached a certain age.



Loren Steffy

No consideration is given to the condition of the books or who might benefit from these learning resources outside of the public school system.

The publisher's eternal quest for profit supersedes any concern for the spread of knowledge.

But there are some pleasant glitches in this system of mandatory book destruction.

While in New York City last week, I found *Dreams and Decisions*, an eighth-grade counterpart to the *Rhymes and Reasons* reader published by MacMillan.

Rhymes and Reasons was one of the books on its way from a Bryan elementary school to a recycling plant because of a 1980 copyright.

What would the publishers say if they found out their book was being sold for a dollar at a second-hand bookstore only a few blocks from their headquarters? After all, that's good recycling money down the drain.

New York isn't the only place such textbooks have turned up for sale.

My wife found an edition of *Mirrors and Images*, also known to *Rhymes and Reasons*, on sale at Skaggs Alpha Beta.

My New York wanderings also took me into the factory outlet of Harper and Row. Apparently, such recycling policies apply to all books, not just texts.

I heard the lady behind the counter ask another employee, "If a person wants a book that's no longer in print, and we happen to have it, can we sell it to them even though we're supposed to send it back to the factory?"

Luckily, the bookstore employees did not share their publishers' sentiments.

"Yeah," replied the other employee. "If they ask, we'll just say we didn't know it was out of print."

The publishers' attitudes to their own products are disturbing because it sets a limit on the benefits derived from any given text.

The authors of these books didn't write them with the idea that the educational resource they were providing would be discarded once it reached a certain age.

Books are one of our most valuable and fragile resources — so fragile that natural decay poses almost as great a threat as the publishers' recycling contracts.

As Vartan Gregorian, president of the New York Public Library told the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education earlier this month, books are deteriorating because of "the ravages of

time, use, misuse and the very content of the paper itself."

Gregorian explained that most books published since the mid-19th century have been printed on paper containing self-destructive acids.

"It is ironic," Gregorian said, "that the production of cheap paper — which helped democratize the written word — also bore the seeds of its own destruction."

But the "cheap" paper makes enough in recycling revenues that publishers can justify their lack of regard for the book's contents.

The famous story of young Abraham Lincoln walking miles to borrow school books demonstrates the respect he had for the information contained in their pages.

If Lincoln had lived in modern-day Texas, state policy would have made his quest fruitless.

He would have been rebuffed by publishers seeking to monopolize their markets, and a state education agency that is unconcerned with education beyond school walls.

When I worked in a restaurant, we rarely thought of what we served as food. Orders had to be filled as quickly as possible.

Portions were slopped on the plate with little consideration given to the fact that someone was paying good money to eat it.

After french fries sat in a bin for 15 minutes, they were discarded — they weren't inedible, just no longer attractive.

The same thing is happening with textbooks. Pages are slapped together and doled out to the public.

When the six years is up on the copyright, the books, like the french fries from my restaurant days, are discarded.

The textbook industry has entered the world of fast-food publishing, and the public has little input into the menu.

Mass consumption is a bigger concern than education for the masses.

Textbooks are more than a means of filling an educational quota in the public schools. They are, in a way, immortal.

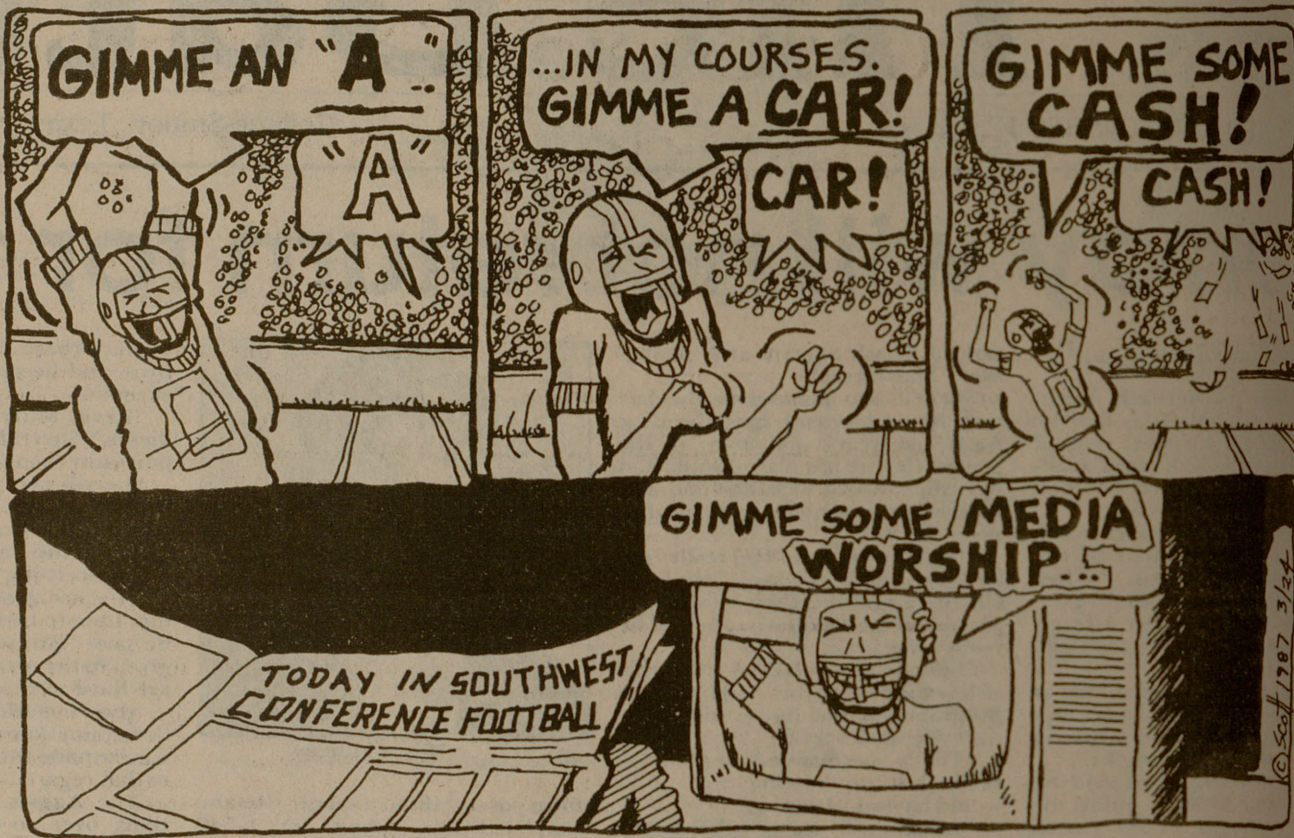
If we can keep them from the paper shredder, they may never stop teaching.

The book in the New York second-hand store may sit on that shelf for years. It may never be purchased.

On the other hand, it may find its way into the hands of a child — or perhaps a teacher, parent or tutor — who can put its contents to good use.

If one educational future is helped because of a second-hand textbook, then it was worth saving from the scrap heap.

Loren Steffy is a journalism graduate and editor for The Battalion.



Ann Landers can't hold a candle to him

Ann Landers, adviser to the love-lorn, is leaving the *Chicago Sun-Times*, where I used to work, and moving across Michigan Avenue to the rival *Chicago Tribune*.



Lewis Grizzard

It was bound to happen. Columnists Bob Greene and Mike Royko, two of the best, jumped ship and moved to the *Tribune*.

I was at the *Sun-Times* nearly 30 years myself. Actually I was there nearly three years, but it seemed more like 30.

Chicago wasn't my kind of town, as I have noted before. The weather didn't suit my clothes and this woman left me there one cold night and that's all I want to say about that.

Still, I'm loyal to an old employer and now that the *Sun-Times* has launched a nationwide search for someone to take Miss Landers' place, I would like to come to the rescue.

I wouldn't move back to Chicago for all the gold on Division Street, but I could do an advice column to the love-lorn from my desk in Atlanta and send it to Chicago by Greyhound.

Don't laugh. You're dealing with a man of great experience when it comes to love.

Currently auditioning is under way for the part of the fourth Mrs. Grizzard (Dial 1-800-555-LUST if you are interested), so I feel completely qualified to answer letters from those who have a need to know in the area of romance.

"Grizzard is my name, romance is my game," is how I introduce myself to the various lovelies who cross my path despite the fact they usually react either by calling the police or kneeling me in the groin.

I'm not all brag here. I can even give examples of things I know about love, marriage and that other stuff. Remember these points.

1. Never marry a man whose mother still refers to him as "Sonny Boy."
2. Never marry a woman whose mother has a tattoo and has voting privileges in a bike gang.

3. Never marry anybody who more troubles than you do.

4. Remember that bad breath does make him or her a bad person.

5. Love conquers all. Wear a gag if you have to.

6. Never get involved with anybody who says he is a "prince under sheets." He may mean he's a member of the Klan.

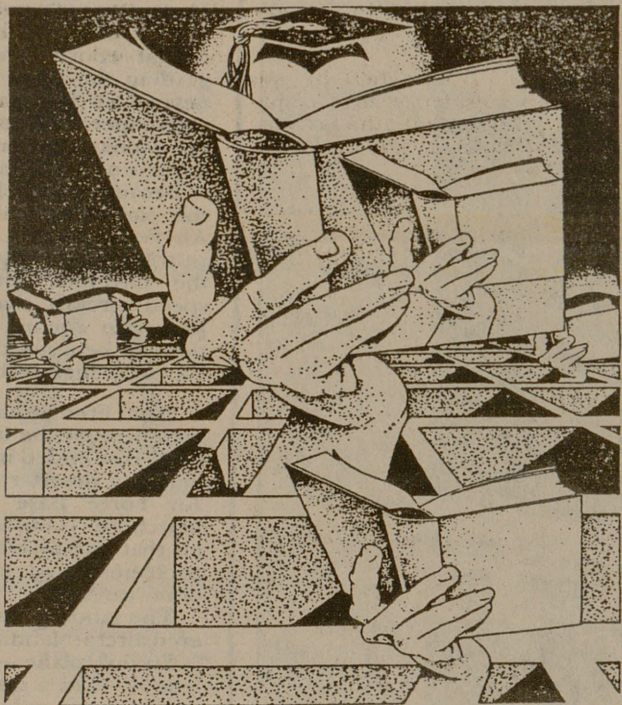
7. Beware of anybody who binges more than twice every five. I'm not exactly sure why, but trust me.

8. Beware of any man whose friends call him "Snake," and any woman whose friends refer to her in any way that gins with the term "Big," as in "Big ma" or "Big Hazel," or "Big Noise Winnetka."

9. Never get married early in the morning and spoil the rest of the day.

10. Beware: there is no such thing as free sex anymore. The least it will cost you is the price of a condom.

I anxiously await the *Sun-Times*.
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Mail Call

Quit teasing him

EDITOR:

I'm having a little difficulty understanding the meaning of the cartoon "Waldo" in the March 10 and 11 issues of *The Battalion*. I guess they're fairly clear — you are making fun of God. It may sound like I'm writing this in judgment; however I'm nowhere near perfect either, so I need to hear it also.

When I read the cartoons, this scripture came to mind — "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." Galatians 6:7,8.

The result is clear — life or death. We do need to spend our lives pleasing God, it is important.

Mary Ann Hisel '90

Speaking of business

EDITOR:

Last year, Pepsi decided to sell its soft drink in Laos. To advertise it, they used their successful "Choice of a New Generation" campaign. Unfortunately, in the Laotian language their slogan translates as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead."

Although humorous, this blunder underscores two of the reasons why the American economy has flagged in the last twenty years: cultural ignorance and cultural arrogance. They may not be as obvious as inflation, trade deficits or the national debt, but they're at least as important. Cultural ignorance and arrogance are closely related. Japan, Russia, France and all of our other trading partners have learned to deal with us in English. Because of this, we have become lax in learning their languages and cultures. For the same reasons we have become arrogant, expecting foreign businesspeople to learn English, to know our culture and to know American business practices.

Knowing all of the preceding, I was surprised when I found that the A&M College of Business, one of the best in the country, does not require its students to take a foreign language. The college is in a position to improve the national economy and to make its own contribution. It may not be able to help directly in a solution for inflation or the national debt, but it can address the problem of cultural ignorance. To do this would require only minor changes in the curriculum. One way would be to eliminate the international elective and one of the humanities electives, and replace them with a required two semesters in a foreign language. Although most of the classes included among the international electives give some insight into foreign cultures, a foreign language class provides a more intense study of a particular culture. This way, a business

graduate can improve his or her chances for landing a job. It would be safe to assume that nearly every major American corporation has offices in several foreign countries. So, those graduates with specialized training in another language would certainly have an advantage in their job market.

Another method would be for the College of Business to work with the Department of Modern Languages in developing classes that introduce the students to other cultures. These classes would explore areas such as politics, business practices, general religious beliefs, and possibly a history of the culture. These classes would not include language instruction because they would be covering regions of the world: the Hispanic world, the Far East, Africa, etc. Although these curricular changes would add four or five hours to the degree requirement, the time seems insignificant compared to the graduate's improved chances in the real world and to the overall improvement of America's business relations.

Robert Dowdy '88

Good intentions

EDITOR:

The recent events surrounding the sale of arms to Iran in exchange for hostages and the channelling of funds from those sales to revolutionaries in Nicaragua have captured the headlines for the past several weeks. However, the underlying goals of these two actions should not be discolored by the erroneous methods undertaken to meet those goals; it is possible to do the right thing in the wrong way.

The allegation that President Reagan's administration illegally channeled funds to the freedom fighters in Nicaragua in no way nullifies the justness of the American people's support for those men fighting their freedom any more than the sale of arms to Iran justifies abandonment of the pursuit of freedom for the hostages held in Lebanon.

The Communist regime of Daniel Ortega is still as oppressive, the press is still censored, demonstrations are still crushed, and certain unalienable rights endowed to us by our creator are still denied to the people of Nicaragua. As long as injustice of this type exists, it is the obligation of the possessor of freedom to pursue the advancement of those freedoms, even if he stumbles in that pursuit, and, as Teddy Roosevelt said, even if "at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Markel L. Simmons

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion

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