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The Battalion

Renovation enhances bookstore

By JULIE HEDDERMAN
Of The Battalion Staff

More space for customers, more customer service and an increase in products are some improvements resulting from the renovation of the Texas A&M Bookstore, the general manager says.

Gary Spearow says the bookstore opened Jan. 2, but it still is under construction.

He says there is increased traffic and interest in the renovated store. "It's a beautiful store and I think everybody's curiosity brought them out," he says.

The MSC Bookstore was sold in June to a private company, Barnes and Noble, Inc., which bought the bookstore, also owns B. Dalton bookstores.

Spearow says book prices have not increased since the renovation and privatization.

Several items are featured at discount prices, including highlighters, notepads and notebooks.

He says some changes have been made in the general reading department. There also are more books in the technical reference and literary theory areas.

Spearow says the bookstore sent requests to all faculty members to find out which books they would like in the general reading department. He says he believes this is the best way to complement students' needs.

He says the store has received only good responses since it opened. "People are pleased with the fact that it's easy to negotiate, the light-



HUY THANH NGUYEN/The Battalion

MSC Bookstore Manager Gary Spearow oversees increased student flow through the recently remodeled facility, which is still under construction.

ing is good and the product mix is new," Spearow says.

Tom Marek, a senior history major who bought books in the MSC,

says the bookstore is more organized and has more space.

Matthew Tyson, a senior electrical engineering major, says the

bookstore looks much better.

"It looks more open now," he says. "You can walk through without bumping into everyone."

A&M official applauds improved phone system

By TWILA WADDY
Of The Battalion Staff

While some Texas A&M students who register by phone still may encounter some problems, last year's increase in the number of phone lines has improved the registration system, says A&M Registrar Donald Carter.

A&M students encountered many problems because only 32 phone lines were available, but the registrar's office added 64 last year to cope with the large number of students calling.

Carter says more problems were caused by other terminals tied into the same mainframe computer, because everybody is vying for the same computer time.

"The more people you have using the terminals and calling in, the slower the response time," he says.

A&M installed the telephone registration system in 1985. Telephone voice-response communication has been used for many years in banks and financial institutions, but universities only began using it a few years ago, Carter says.

Phone lines were added not only to increase the capacity of the registration system, but also to install new programs for students.

"You can call in now and have all your courses read back to you with the building and room," he says. "Now you are not required to stand in line and get another schedule."

The program was added to phone

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— Donald Carter,
Texas A&M registrar

registration last semester. In the future, other things will be added to make registering easier, Carter says.

The fiscal office will make it possible for students to get information over the phone, including the amount owed to A&M, Carter says.

Plans also are in the works to give grades the week after finals over the phone, but official grades still will be mailed to students' permanent addresses. Carter says the program could be implemented before the end of the year.

"The registration process has evolved slowly over the years," he says. "At least we think it has evolved in a positive matter to benefit students and the faculty."

More colleges are using telephone registration, many using A&M's phone system as a model.

Despite the added phone lines, Carter says it still might take a student an hour or two to access the registration system. After 10 a.m., however, he says students should not have as much trouble.

"We have the best registration," he says. "This is state-of-the-art registration for college campuses."

Gov. Richards says proposed insurance increases outrageous

AUSTIN (AP) — On her first full day on the job, Gov. Ann Richards ripped the insurance industry Wednesday, describing proposed automobile premium increases as "outrageous" and calling for major reforms in regulation.

Consumer advocates praised Richards' appearance before the State Board of Insurance, while insurance industry officials said her

recommendations were unfair.

In a related development, Lt. Gov. Bob Bullock created a new Senate subcommittee on insurance and appointed as its chairman Sen. Carl Parker, D-Port Arthur, a frequent critic of the insurance industry.

"I support Gov. Richards very much in what she's trying to do" on insurance reform, Bullock said.

At the start of the insurance

board's public hearing on auto rates, Richards urged regulators to delay a decision until an independent audit can determine whether an increase is justified.

The board's staff has recommended a 23.3 percent rate increase, which would be the largest hike in at least 32 years. Insurers want a 29.1 percent increase. The state's con-

sumer advocate recommended an 11.4 percent boost.

"I want all of you, as the State Board of Insurance, to fulfill what I believe is the public mandate to monitor insurance rates for the public good," said Richards, who took office Tuesday.

"Unfortunately, the recommendations before this board today regarding auto insurance rates, I think

would suggest otherwise than the public good," she said.

Richards also said legislation would be introduced to establish a system where the board could collect independent data on insurance losses and expenses. Currently, such information is provided by the insurance industry.

"Unless we have independent information that is provided in the

public interest we are going to continue to see this business as usual, and it's time that it stop," Richards said.

"This is a terrific indication on the part of Gov. Richards that she intends to fulfill her promise to change the way insurance is regulated," John Hildreth, director of the Southwest office of Consumers Union, said.

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