

The College of Idaho Increases Savings with Online Bookstore

About The College of Idaho

- FTE: 1,200
- Liberal arts college focusing on on-campus undergraduate studies
- Physical store, the College Store, features spirit wear from name-brand labels including Under Armour

MBS Direct Online Bookstore

- Provides schools a branded, online bookstore where students can affordably and conveniently get their course materials
- 24/7 Customer Contact Center with email, live chat, phone and social media options
- Variety of purchasing options for students (digital, rental, new and used books, Marketplace, etc.) to save in whatever way works best for them

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Since partnering with MBS Direct in 2013 The College of Idaho is able to look back and see steady progress resulting from the partnership.

Evaluating their transition

When The College of Idaho first partnered with MBS Direct in the summer of 2013, they did so with the hope that a transition to an Online Bookstore would not only make things more convenient for everyone, but that what was their on-campus bookstore would now thrive as, primarily, an apparel shop.

Now, a handful of semesters later, they are able to look back at that transition with the realization that their goals were met. "It's been great," said **Bookstore Manager Susan Hunsperger**, speaking on how the switch from a physical to online bookstore has affected her job and business. "It makes my job a whole lot easier. It's night and day. I don't know why the other schools would keep the hassle of all the books."

Before signing on to deploy the Online Bookstore, the College Store was partnered with a lessor who frequently fell short of their expectations. And although that fact makes it difficult to precisely evaluate just how much things like the store's overhead was minimized or its revenue was improved, Hunsperger estimates that it's significant.



“The reduction in our overhead costs has got to be quite a bit – the postage alone of shipping books is horrendous,” she said. “And then our revenue has increased just because of [the lessor] not being here.”

How things have changed

Obviously, without all of their books stocked on campus, and without a lessor, day-to-day at the College Store has changed quite a bit, but almost universally for the better.

There are now fewer things that Hunsperger finds herself worried about. “I don’t have to get all my employees to stock or ship books anymore, or to check them in or out. Theft is not much of a concern either.”

These positive changes have extended to The College of Idaho students as well. “If [students] had something coming up and they want something to wear, they’re not going to go online and search through and not be able to touch and feel it and try it on,” Hunsperger said.

“ I think it has been really successful ... way past what anyone expected. ”

– Susan Hunsperger

After some initial hesitation towards getting rid of on-campus textbooks, it looks like just about everyone has caught on to the idea that this new partnership works better for all parties. Hunsperger provided an example of how things used to be without an Online Bookstore when she said, “Most of the kids go online anyway looking for books, and with that, they’re dealing with a company that’s expensive to order from and there is more money spent shipping back and forth, so it monetarily made a better deal [to partner with MBS Direct].”

And while the Online Bookstore is humming along, the College Store is now thriving as an apparel shop. Thanks to a partnership with Under Armour, the College Store offers

some of the best clothing and merchandise selections you’ll find at any collegiate store.

Behind the scenes

While the bird’s eye view of the College Store is looking prettier than ever, some of the more detailed work that often goes unseen is running more efficiently as well, as Hunsperger has made an effort to take advantage of a few of MBS Direct’s product and services.

One of her favorites is Course Director, which has made a big difference in The College of Idaho’s adoptions. “I use Course Director all the time. It’s not a difficult program. It’s easy to pull up old books that we’ve adopted before, and it’s easy to go back and look up anything else we’ve done in the past,” she said.

When she has questions about Course Director or anything else, the first person Hunsperger turns to is the account management team at MBS Direct. “They’re phenomenal. We’ve never had a problem. They help me do everything. They deal directly with [publishers and other people] I don’t have time to deal with, and they get everything set up for the semester.”

Even when her students make ordering mistakes, Hunsperger will turn to her dedicated account manager first. “I had a couple kids that ordered too soon or missed free shipping. But I sent them over to [my account manager] and they got their free shipping right away.”

All in all, Hunsperger and The College of Idaho seem to be running smoother than ever before, in large part thanks to their Online Bookstore. Their revenue is up, their overhead is down, and their students have convenience at their fingertips at all times – whether they’re buying books on a computer at home, or getting to touch and try on some new gear at The College Store.