

OVERPRICED AND UNDERUSED: THE COST OF TEXTBOOKS

Adan Macias | Reporter
amacias@therampageonline.com

As a new semester begins at Fresno City College, students once again face a hidden cost: textbooks. These required books often cost as much as the class itself, leaving many students frustrated.

A couple semesters ago, I had to purchase the textbook, "Traditions and Encounters: A Brief Global History," for one of my courses. At first, I didn't think much of it—until I saw the price. Even buying a used copy cost me about \$40. Over the entire semester, we only used it a handful of times. Now it just sits in the back of my closet, collecting dust. It always bothered me how little the textbook was used. It was required, but in reality we used it so little that the cost didn't justify how much I paid for it.



FRESNO CITY COLLEGE'S BOOKSTORE ON AUG. 28. PHOTO BY ADAN MACIAS.

Buying books for class isn't always a bad idea, however, when you factor in how much they cost and how little they get used sometimes, the system doesn't make sense. Why should students spend hundreds of dollars each semester on books that might only be opened a few times a semester? According to Average Cost of College Textbooks: Full Statistics, students can spend over \$1,000 on textbooks alone.

"It sucks because the books are expensive," said Bobby Adame, a nursing major at FCC.

Thankfully, students can avoid taking classes with required textbooks, since registering for classes informs students whether a course requires one.

"My classes emphasized there were no required textbooks, and showed us where to find our required reading on canvas," said Les Earle, a computer science major.

A recent poll taken by The Rampage website

found that 36% of FCC students believe textbooks are "maybe a little" too expensive, while 64% said they are "absolutely" overpriced. Not a single student believed they were fairly priced.

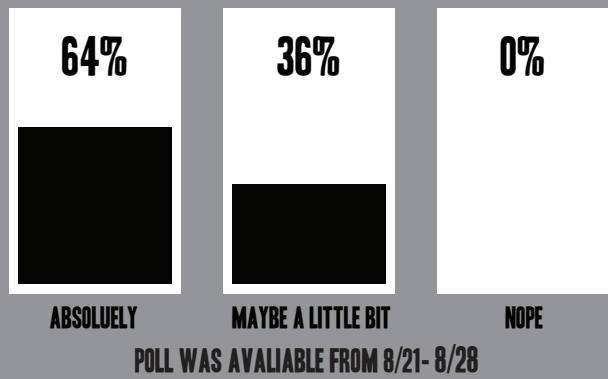
And while some people argue that at least students can resell their books, this option is shrinking. More and more required books are moving online, meaning they can't be resold once the semester ends. On top of that, publishers constantly release new editions, making older copies obsolete.

Requiring students to purchase costly textbooks on top of already high tuition fees doesn't encourage learning—it discourages it. Education shouldn't come with such a steep price tag.

Required textbooks are holding students and the education system back, but if students call for change maybe one day we will be able to change the system for good. Education is a right not a privilege.

RAMPAGE WEBSITE POLL: >>

ARE TEXTBOOKS TOO EXPENSIVE?



SPOTIFY: UNDERPAYING ARTIST, AND THEIR SHADY INVESTMENTS

Isaias Robles | Reporter
irobles@therampageonline.com

For over a decade, Spotify has been the leader in music streaming, shaping the way millions of people listen to music. As a user myself, I've always appreciated its convenience, playlists, and endless library which makes finding new songs easy. In many ways, Spotify has been the standard, the app that people automatically think of when it comes to streaming. But when I started looking deeper into how the company actually runs, my view began to change.

I was shocked to learn that artists often earn less than a cent per stream, meaning the music we love barely benefits them. On top of that, Spotify's CEO, Daniel Ek, has invested roughly \$702 million into a German AI military startup, raising serious ethical concerns about the platform's priorities (Financial Times; KQED). These financial decisions make me question whether supporting Spotify truly aligns with my values.

To explore this further, I spoke with other students to hear their perspectives. Their insights helped me reflect on my role as a listener and consider the ethical implications of where I choose to spend my money. It also made me think about how platforms could better support the artists who make them successful.

Before diving into what others had to say, I think it's important to explain where I personally stand on Spotify. As someone who has used the app for years, I've always enjoyed it and never really thought about what went on behind the scenes. But after doing the research and actually learning about some of the issues connected to Spotify, my perspective has completely changed.

One of the biggest things I disagree with is how little artists are paid. Honestly, before this, I never thought about it, but finding out that streams add up to less than a cent for artists made me upset. If I'm listening to my favorite artists, I want to know that my support is going to them, not barely covering anything. At the very least, streaming services like Spotify should push for a fairer payout, even something like 10 cents per stream, which feels more realistic and respectful to the people actually making the music.

Then there's the issue of Spotify's investments. When I found out the company put over \$700 million into military and defense technology, I was shocked. Why would a music platform need to invest in weapons or drones? If that much money

can go into something unrelated to music, then why can't more of it go toward paying the artists who keep the platform alive? To me, that just doesn't make sense and makes Spotify look disconnected from the values it should stand for.

And finally, there's the entire cryptocurrency aspect of things. I've never been a fan of cryptocurrency because it feels unstable, and companies that rely on it usually promote the wins loudly but stay silent about the losses. Knowing that Spotify has gotten involved in this space makes me uncomfortable—it feels like a gamble with no apparent benefit for listeners or artists.

After seeing all this, I've honestly started to question my own contributions to Spotify. I still enjoy the app, but knowing about these practices makes me wonder if it's worth relying on. I even see why some people choose to switch to Apple Music or other services, and I'm starting to think that might be the better choice for me, too.

“ ARTISTS PUT IN ALL THE WORK, AND WITHOUT THEM THERE'S NO SPOTIFY. IF THEY'RE NOT GETTING PAID RIGHT, THEN THE WHOLE SYSTEM FEELS MESSED UP. ”

Both Alejandro Arevalo and Ruben Martinez felt strongly that musicians deserve more. "Artists put in all the work, and without them, there's no Spotify. If they're not getting paid right, then the whole system feels messed up," Arevalo said.

Both interviewees also questioned where Spotify chooses to spend its money. Martinez was especially critical of the company's investments in military technology. "If Spotify has hundreds of millions to spend on weapons, then they have no excuse for underpaying artists. That money should go back into the music industry," Martinez said. Finding it strange that a music platform would pour money into crypto and defense projects while musicians struggle.

Arevalo also raised concerns about privacy, noting that apps like Spotify collect a lot of user data. "They know your location, what you listen to, even when you listen it feels like too much sometimes," Arevalo said. Both Arevalo and Martinez questioned whether Spotify's priorities are truly



PLATFORM	PAY PER STREAM
TIDAL	\$0.013
Apple MUSIC	\$0.01
YouTube Music	\$0.008
amazon music	\$0.004
Spotify	\$0.003-\$0.005

AVERAGES OF GLOBAL RATES | DATA FROM ROUTENOTE.COM
GRAPHIC BY WYATT BIBLE

aligned with supporting music and its community.

Spotify has built its reputation as a leading music platform, but there's still a lot to fix. From underpaying artists to investing in unrelated industries and raising privacy concerns, the platform risks losing the trust of the very people who keep it successful. Spotify should focus less on outside projects and more on supporting the artists and listeners who made it popular. So, what do you think? As students and listeners, should we continue to support a music platform with so many problems, or is it time to push for real change?