



Brown University

**BOOKSTORE REVIEW COMMITTEE
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

March 2006

Committee Roster

Beppie Huidekoper, CHAIR
*Executive VP for Finance
and Administration*

David Ain '04
Medical Student

Paul Armstrong
Dean of the College

Brian Casey
*Assistant Provost
(departed Brown 12/05)*

Michael Chapman
*VP for Public Affairs and
University Relations*

Stephen M. Foley
*Associate Professor
of English*

John Funchion
Graduate student in English

Elliott Gorn
Professor of History

Shriram Krishnamurthi
*Assistant Professor
of Computer Science*

Walter Hunter
VP for Administration

Brendan McNally, STAFF
*Special Assistant to EVP
for Planning*

Kenneth Miller
Professor of Biology

Anya Rasulovala '08
Undergraduate

Zachary Townsend '08
Undergraduate

Ellen Waite-Franzen
*VP for Computing and
Information Services*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Executive Summary

At the request of the Cabinet, a Bookstore Review Committee was formed in early 2005 to explore opportunities to improve the Brown Bookstore. It had been more than 10 years since the store was last refurbished, and it was felt that the store and the Brown community could benefit from a thorough study of its operations, layout, merchandising, and services. Further, over the last decade changes in the buying and selling of textbooks, trade books, and computer systems – including online vendors and integrated operating systems – have significantly affected how university bookstores operate.

Composed of faculty, students, and staff, the committee has spent the past eleven months studying the Brown Bookstore's current operations, industry practices, and options for managing the store. Input has been received from students, faculty, and staff through e-mails, interviews, and committee interactions with the Brown community.

The committee found that while the Brown Bookstore and its employees have done a good job of serving the community, there is considerable potential and, in fact, that the University has the responsibility to improve product offerings, service, aesthetics, and layout in the store to make it a more comfortable, academic, and welcoming destination for both Brown and the community. Through its work, the committee learned that opinions about the store cover a wide spectrum, from those that consider the Bookstore a University gem that should be left alone to those that feel the store does not reflect Brown's academic heritage well and that it is in need of both physical and operational improvements.

The committee investigated three operating options for better realizing the store's potential:

1. Continue with self-operation.
2. Form a partnership with an independent bookseller to manage the Brown store.
3. Contract with a vendor specializing in higher education bookstores.

The committee determined that a partnership with an independent bookseller would not offer the full range of management expertise and services that Brown needs. Therefore, it narrowed the viable options to two: remain self-operating or contract with a vendor. Of the two options, contracting with a vendor was preferred by the majority of the committee, as it offers the most potential to provide expertise, resources, systems, and capital to upgrade the Bookstore, as well as the capacity to stay current with changes in the college merchandise and text- and trade-book markets in the future. Barnes and Noble College Booksellers Inc. and Follett Higher Education Group dominate the higher-education bookstore market and should be seriously considered. Both are privately held companies that serve only the education marketplace. They are not companies that operate retail bookstores in malls. Barnes and Noble College Booksellers may be better qualified to meet Brown's needs, but further study of both vendors would be advisable to secure the best outcome for Brown. It is also important to clarify that while Barnes and Noble College Booksellers is not publicly traded, it is affiliated with Barnes and Noble Inc., a publicly traded company.

The committee acknowledges that the continuity of the staff, competitive staff salaries and benefits, favorable textbook pricing (something we currently do well), unique store aesthetics, and a broad selection of academic books are key priorities that Brown would need to structure into any agreement with a vendor. Further, the committee realizes that contracting with a corporate vendor would likely elicit strong voices in opposition to “selling out” to a national corporation and ceding Brown’s independence. This opposition should not be underestimated, and the Cabinet should give special consideration to whether the extent of opposition will be strong enough to divide the campus and distract attention from Brown’s Academic Enrichment initiatives. As a result, the committee recommends that both operating options should be explored more fully in the community before a final decision is made.

Self-operation of the store remains a viable alternative, as evidenced by the Bookstore’s overall contributions to the University and its current and past performance. Taking the store to a higher level of community satisfaction and keeping it there will require heightened retail management attention and resources.

In the end, however, the committee believes that with a well-defined vendor contract that covers oversight mechanisms, branding (pure Brown), continued employment of current staff, and ongoing community input, the Bookstore can do an excellent job of serving the Brown and non-Brown communities in the coming years. Last, while financial contribution ranked relatively low on the committee’s list of priorities, a vendor is likely to provide a consistent contribution that could help support Academic Enrichment initiatives and also fund capital improvements in the Bookstore.

Overview

During the winter of 2005, the Cabinet recommended that an ad hoc committee be formed to explore opportunities to improve the service of, and overall community satisfaction with, the Brown Bookstore. It has been more than 10 years since the store was last refurbished, and significant changes in the business models of college bookstores have taken place during the last decade. Further, comments and e-mails from faculty, students, and alumni indicated the Bookstore could benefit from a thorough evaluation of its operations, its infrastructure and architecture, and its role as an “anchor” store on Thayer Street. The Cabinet looked to the committee for a set of recommendations and a list of priorities that would strengthen the store’s ability to serve the Brown community, the University’s neighbors on College Hill, and the many parents, friends, and alumni who visit the Brown campus.

A committee was formed composed of 14 Brown faculty, students, and staff. The committee is chaired by Beppie Huidekoper, executive vice president for finance and administration.

The committee began its discussions by affirming that the current management of the Brown Bookstore has fulfilled many of the expectations that the University had set for it, expectations that have remained largely unchanged for much of the last decade. For example, the Bookstore provides students with textbooks on a reliable basis and at reasonable cost; it provides a wide array of trade books for its Brown and non-Brown customers; it provides a variety of retail goods (e.g., clothing and other items with the Brown insignia); and it contributes to the University’s overall financial health.

In addition, the committee noted that the Bookstore's leadership and many members of its staff are dedicated and knowledgeable employees who work hard to fulfill the Bookstore's obligations and objectives.

Acknowledging these positive attributes, the committee also believes that the Bookstore faces a number of challenges, given the significant changes that have taken place in the college bookstore and retail industry in recent years, and that now is the time for the University to conduct a significant overhaul of the Bookstore to ensure that it can remain a successful enterprise and meet the expectations of its Brown and non-Brown customers for the long term.

With these attributes and challenges in mind, the committee met regularly in the spring and fall semesters of 2005 to learn about the Bookstore's current operations, investigate how other universities operate their bookstores, and learn about new trends and developments in the college bookstore industry.

In May 2005, the committee issued an Interim Report to the Cabinet that detailed its work up to that time and offered a draft vision and goals for the Bookstore. (Please see Appendix A). This document helped set an initial framework for priorities and criteria by which to compare options.

To inform its work, the committee met with the Brown Bookstore's leadership and members of its staff, interviewed independent bookstore managers and representatives of larger corporate entities that manage many other bookstores for colleges and universities across the country, toured other university bookstores, analyzed industry data, and held investigatory discussions with potential management partners. (Please see Appendix B for a list of committee activities.)

The committee also reached out to Brown faculty and students through a series of e-mails that asked for input on what works well at the store, what changes are recommended, and what priorities the Bookstore should focus on. Through the late spring, summer, and fall of 2005, the committee received more than 150 e-mails from students, faculty, and staff providing suggestions on improvements, priorities, and overall satisfaction with the store.

The input from the community reflected a wide range of opinions on the Bookstore and recommendations for changes. Clearly some members of the community are satisfied with the Bookstore's current condition and value its operation as an independent bookstore. There are many others, however, who believe that its infrastructure and architecture are outdated and in need of renovation. Some community members noted that the Bookstore's offering of retail books is erratic and that its presentation is confusing. Others expressed a very strong desire that the store should offer a broader and more interesting collection of serious academic books and journals that would be of interest to Brown faculty and students.

In addition, members of the Brown community commented on the Bookstore's offering of retail goods, especially clothing and other items with the Brown insignia, noting that these items should be more contemporary and reflect a consistent branding image for the University. Others believe that the Bookstore's offering of food and grocery items and inexpensive Brown souvenirs undermine its standing as a serious academic bookstore that serves a scholarly community.

Further, others believe that while many staff members at the Bookstore are excellent employees, the University should seek a consistently high level of performance and service from every employee. Some community members cited instances of exemplary customer service, but others commented about the need for improvement in the speed and quality of the service.

Finally, many members of the Brown community have noted that the Bookstore's current structure, its internal layout and external storefront, its hours of operation, and its advertising leave the impression that the Bookstore is available only for those who are Brown faculty, students, and staff, and not for the general public. To the extent that the University seeks the active business of our neighbors on College Hill and people who visit, shop, and dine on Thayer Street, the Bookstore's current structure and presentation are not conducive to this goal.

From its investigations, the committee strongly believes there is considerable potential to enhance the Brown Bookstore's operations and its ability to serve the Brown and non-Brown communities, and to strengthen its standing as a serious academic bookstore that would be appealing to broad array of customers. (See Appendix A – Proposed Vision and Goals for the Brown Bookstore.)

Options the Committee Investigated

Through its work, the committee investigated three operating options to better realize the potential of the store:

1. Continue with its current “self-operation” (i.e., have the University continue to manage the Bookstore), with the strong belief that improvements and investments should be made.
2. Form a partnership with an independent bookseller to manage the store.
3. Contract with a vendor that specializes in operating higher-education bookstores.

A fourth option of having an independent bookseller take over the store without any formal partnership with the University was dismissed because the committee believed that it created the most risk and offered the least control over the Bookstore's future.

Recommendation

The findings below support the committee's conclusion that the decision is between two options: have the University continue to manage the Bookstore (while making significant investments in the Bookstore's infrastructure and changing many aspects of the retail side of its operations) or contract with a vendor to manage the Bookstore.

Of these two options, the majority of committee members believe that contracting with a vendor is the better choice. By prudently structuring an agreement with a vendor that specializes in college bookstores, the committee believes that the University and the Bookstore can achieve many important goals, such as improving the product selection, upgrading the Bookstore's physical infrastructure, upgrading and sustaining the Web site and technical support, providing ongoing planning and investment, enhancing employee performance, keeping up with expected changes in the text- and trade-book markets, and maintaining a financial contribution to the University.

Following are key benefits anticipated with a vendor:

- Store management and oversight by a firm that specializes only in college and university bookstores
- Continued employment of current staff with a minimum commitment of one year with no detrimental change in the overall salary and benefit package (The experience by other universities is that turnover rates beyond the one year-minimum are very low).
- Financial resources to upgrade the store layout, design, and fixtures
- Sustained institutional financial support during and after capital investments
- In-house professional design services to design, plan, and manage store renovations
- Technology and support systems (inventory, point-of-sale, and online services) to manage the operations and finances
- Product purchasing (textbooks, trade books, and merchandise) decided at a store level
- Policies, experience, and tools to frequently measure customer satisfaction
- Employee training, development, and career opportunities
- Partnership with a firm whose future requires it to understand and successfully react to changes in technology and the collegiate bookselling marketplace

Barnes and Noble College Booksellers is the leading college bookstore contract vendor, especially among the Ivy League and selective peer institutions. It is a privately held company whose only business is managing college and a few preparatory-school bookstores. Barnes and Noble College Booksellers is an affiliate of Barnes and Noble Inc., but it is a separate entity with its own management team. The two firms share design and construction resources, and Barnes and Noble College Booksellers uses Barnes and Noble Inc.'s state-of-the-art technology systems. The chairman of Barnes and Noble Inc., Leonard Riggio, is the founder and sole owner of Barnes and Noble College Booksellers.

If the University chooses to contract with a vendor and Barnes and Noble College Booksellers were the selected vendor, the University should communicate clearly with the community that Barnes and Noble College Booksellers is not the same company that operates bookstores in malls throughout the country. In all of its collegiate stores, book purchasing and merchandising is done at the local store level with frequent input from faculty, students, staff, and the general public to ensure that selection and service meet customers' needs. Further, Barnes and Noble recommends the establishment of an advisory committee that meets regularly throughout the year to provide input, review customer feedback, and maintain general oversight of the store's performance. It is understood (and welcomed) by Barnes and Noble College Booksellers that the market served by the Brown Bookstore will include scholarly, academic patrons who want an excellent selection of books, responsive customer service, a comfortable environment, and an overall experience and ambiance that is different from going to the mall.

The committee believes Barnes and Noble College Booksellers would work diligently to best serve the Brown community's unique scholarly needs. The vendor has an impressive record of hiring all interested existing store employees when they sign a contract (this committee rec-

ommends that Brown require this, as well). Barnes and Noble College Booksellers understands and appreciates the knowledge existing employees offer to customers and the relationships that have been developed over many years of interaction. While contractually Brown will require a vendor to keep all employees at comparable salary and benefits, Barnes and Noble's record of retaining employees far beyond the one-year period is exemplary.

The Follett Higher Education Group, which has a significant presence in the higher-education bookstore market, is another viable option for a contract vendor and should be seriously considered. Follett also expressed a desire to retain and develop existing employees and has an excellent record of retaining employees after a transition.

There may be certain instances where a job description does not fit within a new organization's model. Both vendors would agree to work with Brown to assist any affected individuals to find other mutually beneficial opportunities in the store, in the University, or elsewhere.

Computer sales and service are activities not typically managed by college bookstore vendors, as educational discounts from major computer vendors are not extended to firms like Barnes and Noble College Booksellers and Follett. The committee has not made a determination as to how those services should be delivered. Should the vendor option be selected, Brown would need to investigate whether the contract should include oversight of these services or if they should be managed directly through the University.

The committee understands that contracting with a large corporate vendor to manage the Brown Bookstore might provoke a strong and negative reaction from some members of the Brown community. There would likely be concern about the impact of a "corporate" style and sensibility at the Bookstore. Community members will likely raise the issue of whether the University should turn over the operations of such an important asset to an entity not affiliated with the University. The concerns raised would likely focus on the conviction that the University can best manage the store, and that a corporation's goals and management practices are antithetical to University goals.

The committee respects such concerns; however, it also believes that a substantial portion of the Brown community would support a decision to contract with a vendor with decades of experience in managing successful university bookstores. Community support for a vendor contract will be strengthened if the University outlines the structure of the agreement to show how it will benefit the vast majority of Bookstore patrons, while also providing the University with real and lasting input into the identity and operations of the store. The committee notes that it will be very important for Brown to communicate clearly on the process leading to the final decision. (Please see Appendix C for a list of recommended conditions for a vendor partnership.) It is important to note that whichever model Brown elects, the issues of textbook pricing, store aesthetics, and the selection and depth of a wide range of scholarly titles will and should continue to be debated. Improved community input and responsive customer service will be critical factors for success, no matter which operating model Brown chooses.

The Committee's Primary Findings

- ▶ The Brown community values a scholarly college bookstore that is welcoming and comfortable, and provides a range of services and products.
- ▶ The Brown Bookstore does a good job of meeting customer needs, but there is significant room for improvement, especially in layout, aesthetics, and merchandising.
- ▶ Faculty have a wide range of opinions about the store, but generally they desire a much broader and deeper selection of scholarly books and journals.
- ▶ Customer service is generally good, with examples of excellence; however, there are notable instances where service was reported as inconsistent.
- ▶ Current Bookstore management and staff are respected and valued by the community and have done what the University has asked of them.
- ▶ Textbook pricing (and used-book offerings) is a very important and sensitive issue for students, and our current policies successfully set prices at or below industry standards.
- ▶ The college bookstore industry is dynamic and unpredictable; therefore, our store must be equipped to react to retailing trends, competition (brick and mortar and online), and changes in technology.
- ▶ The current financial contribution from the Bookstore is highly valued, and changes could affect – positively or negatively – other priorities for the Plan for Academic Enrichment.
- ▶ Brown could continue successfully to self-operate the store and remain “independent,” but this will require significant resources (management, capital, and consultants), and the current financial contribution may need to be reduced to fund renovations.
- ▶ A contract vendor could run our store successfully and offer a consistent positive financial contribution (including the funding of a renovation).
- ▶ Achieving a look and feel that is unique to Brown (whether or not vendor-managed) will be a challenge that must involve significant University input.
- ▶ Barnes and Noble College Booksellers and Follett Higher Education Group are the two largest vendors specializing in college bookstores, and between them they manage more than 1,200 stores; Barnes and Noble currently manages most of Brown's peer stores. (Please see Appendix D.)
- ▶ The committee investigated partnerships with independent booksellers, specifically with two independent booksellers – Symposium Books Inc. and Harvard Bookstore/Labyrinth Books. This operational model does not exist elsewhere at this time, and while it is very attractive for its focus on serving an academic community with scholarly books and providing excellent customer service, the capabilities and resources of these types of booksellers are limited and are not sufficient to manage the scope and scale of services we require.
- ▶ Of our two options, there is no definitive choice. A contract vendor brings professional systems, processes, and organizational resources to manage on an ongoing basis all aspects of a

college bookstore. The vendor would also assume the capital and information technology expenses. Self-operation allows full control by the University, but with greater financial risk and continued management attention.

- ▶ Contracting with a vendor is likely to be a more controversial, and perhaps divisive, option for the Brown community and may divert resources and attention away from the priorities of Academic Enrichment.

Decision Factors and Rating Process

To assist in developing primary findings and a recommendation, the committee conducted a ranking of decision criteria to determine priorities. In order of importance, the factors the committee believes are most important to operating the Brown Bookstore are:

- Textbooks (new and used) – delivery and service
- Textbooks (new and used) – pricing
- Renovation – skill, resources, and funding to design and renovate a unique bookstore for Brown
- Service orientation
- Trade books (including scholarly/academic books and magazines, popular fiction and nonfiction, used, and remainders) – selection, delivery, and service
- Management and employment practices – organizational model and capabilities
- Merchandise supplier oversight and relations – assuring that Brown does business with vendors who do not exploit labor and who adhere to University codes of ethics
- Web site capabilities – ability and skill to offer products and services online and to keep pace with developing trends and technology
- Branded merchandise – delivery and service
- Systems and information technology capabilities – manage sales, service, and inventory
- Community outreach
- Maintaining financial contribution – ability to deliver a contribution (in the form of a percentage of sales, rent, or other)
- Computer – delivery and service of hardware, supplies, and peripherals
- Convenience items – sales and service

Once these priorities were established, the committee evaluated the effectiveness of each operating option against the decision factors. This process was not designed to be the tool to select an option, but it did act as a helpful step in rating each option against the criteria. Further, it confirmed most committee members' overall impressions.

From this rating process, the committee concluded there is a bias toward recommending a contract vendor. A vendor can successfully manage and commit resources (renovation, systems, training, etc.) over the long term to deliver textbooks, trade books, and merchandise.

Contracting with a firm that has considerable resources solely dedicated to running college bookstores could relieve Brown from day-to-day management of a primarily retail business. The transition could be relatively quick once the contract is negotiated, although the firm is likely to want to run the store through a full semester before any major changes in layout, design, and merchandising are implemented. Further, the committee would recommend that certain partnership conditions be established (see Appendix C) to ensure that the firm would deliver a unique, more academic college bookstore that caters specifically to Brown.

Of the two vendors, Barnes and Noble College Booksellers consistently ranked higher than Follett Higher Education Group. While Follett appears to offer a more generous financial contribution, Barnes and Noble is seen as more capable of delivering and managing a scholarly store, and it allows more decisions to be made at the local store level.

Self-Operation Considerations

It must be noted that continuing self-operation is an acceptable possibility and appeals to those on the committee and in the Brown community who feel the University will better consider the interests of the customers and be less driven by profits or corporate decision-making when making decisions. Further, a well-run, University-managed store would allow all financial contributions to accrue to Brown. (Conversely, the University assumes all the financial risks and capital requirements for renovation and systems.)

As noted above, successful self-operation will require resources to renovate the store, more depth in retail management, and continued investments to stay current with changes in technology. The store must also achieve improved consistency of customer service and more engagement with the non-Brown community. Should Brown remain self-operating, it is strongly recommended that the University hire experienced consultants to assist in the redesign and refurbishment of the store. (Please see Appendix C for a list of conditions for successful continued self-operation).

As the Cabinet discusses the feedback to this report's findings and recommendations, the Cabinet should carefully consider the substance of each option's pros and cons. While the committee believes that Brown could structure a favorable contract to improve the store for its customers and employees, we are aware that unaddressed concerns could detract from the positive momentum of the Plan for Academic Enrichment.

Brown Community Input

The committee recommends that the findings and recommendations in this report should be discussed with the Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), Undergraduate Council of Students (UCS), Graduate Student Council (GSC), Medical Student Senate (MSS), Bookstore staff, and the Staff Advisory Committee (SAC), among others. There should also be one or more open community meetings. Finally, there should be mechanisms for enabling additional input and feedback. The administration should work hard to address all concerns raised.

Recommended Process

- ▶ Release report to Brown community (early March).
- ▶ Conduct community meetings (March).
- ▶ Address concerns raised (March/April).
- ▶ Report back to the Cabinet with final recommendation (April).
- ▶ Cabinet makes final decision (April/May).

APPENDIX A: Proposed Vision and Goals for the Brown Bookstore

Vision

The Brown Bookstore will be an inviting, scholarly bookstore serving Brown students and faculty and the greater East Side community. It will be a destination for book buyers who need and appreciate excellent service, knowledgeable staff, and a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere in which to browse and buy. It will be financially viable and provide students and faculty with competitive prices on new and used textbooks. The environment will be open, easy to navigate, and aesthetically pleasing. With extensive front and backlists, expert staff, and frequent scholarly events open to all customers, the Bookstore will be an important gathering-place and a prominent symbol of Brown's rich academic heritage.

Goals

FOR ALL CUSTOMERS

Proud manifestation of the intellectual priorities of the University

An inviting physical layout and aesthetics that make the store easy to navigate and comfortable to browse

A layout and fixture design that allows the store to more flexibly accommodate seasonal changes, special events, and experimentation

Friendly, efficient service with minimal wait times at the point of sale and a staff that is available to guide customers to the appropriate products

Interaction with knowledgeable staff who love books and can provide thoughtful recommendations and advice on what to read

Events (readings, signings, special occasions) that draw and engage the entire community

Space to allow customers to meet, converse, and browse

The first choice of the Brown and local community when it comes to buying books for personal enjoyment/enrichment and gifts

PRODUCT OFFERINGS

Textbooks (new and used) and course materials

Trade books and periodicals, with particular strength in academic, literary, and scholarly titles (including those by Brown faculty and alumni authors)

Brown insignia products and apparel (that abide by anti-sweatshop labor practices)

Convenience items (greeting cards, dorm and office supplies, health and beauty aids) based on demonstrated customer needs

Computer hardware, software, and peripherals sold and serviced by experienced professionals

Online capabilities to the full range of products and services

STUDENTS

Competitively priced textbooks (new and used) and course materials (judged against competitor benchmarks)

Processes and policies that make course-book buying, returning, and selling (used) efficient and open to scrutiny. (Possibilities include pre-packaged course bundles, delivery options, separate check-out lines, and textbook ordering linked to registration.)

Financial systems that allow charges to be posted to individual student accounts

Sufficient array of Brown apparel and insignia products that students are proud to wear

FACULTY

Efficient processes and systems to facilitate course-book ordering and fulfillment

Front and backlists that appeal to academics and scholars

Displays/sections that proudly promote faculty works

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Frequent events (readings, signings, programs) that draw the whole Brown community and neighbors into the store

Advertising, promotions, and other outreach efforts to make the general public welcome in the store

Extended hours and promotions to draw Thayer Street customers into the store in evenings, weekends, holidays, and student break periods

Reputation as the bookstore in Rhode Island where one goes to get excellent service and scholarly titles

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNIVERSITY

Maintain or improve the current level of annual financial support

Interior renovations and re-fixturing that are part of an overall financial plan for the store and are self-funding or justified as a priority (qualitatively and quantitatively)

ALUMNI / PARENTS

High-quality bookstore that reflects Brown's academic heritage

Wide variety of insignia apparel and products available in-store and online

Promotions and events tied to major weekends designed to draw alumni and parents into the store

Recommended stop or conclusion for campus tours

BROWN STAFF (*under either operating model*)

Competitive salary and benefits

Comparable jobs for a minimum of one year if there is a change in management (EE must be in and remain in good standing)

Opportunities for training and development

PROPOSALS AND CONSIDERATIONS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Café

Frequent buyer programs with efforts targeted at different customers

Newsletters and outreach initiatives that effectively draw customers to the store (or online)

APPENDIX B: Summary of committee evaluation process

In the spring, summer, and fall of 2005, the Bookstore Review Committee conducted investigations into many aspects of university and independent bookstore operations. Following is a summary of the committee's activities:

Interviewed management

INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES

Micawber's, Princeton, NJ

Tatnuck, Worcester, MA

Brookline Booksmith, Brookline, MA

Harvard Bookstore, Cambridge, MA

Labyrinth Books, New York City

Symposium Books, Providence, RI

CONTRACT-MANAGED STORES

Harvard COOP

Boston University

Wesleyan University

Trinity College

Yale University

LARGE INDEPENDENT STORES

Cornell University

University of Connecticut

BROWN BOOKSTORE

Committee visits / tours

Independent stores (Harvard Bookstore, Brookline Booksmith, Symposium Books, Seminary Coop)

Contract-run stores (Harvard Coop, Yale, Trinity, Wesleyan, Boston University, University of Pennsylvania)

Brown Bookstore

Bookstore vision and goals

Drafted a document articulating a vision and goals for an improved Brown Bookstore.

Evaluated industry data / trends

Sales

Margins

Product mix

Contribution

Analyzed Brown Bookstore financials

Sales history

Contribution

Product mix

Cost structure (including compensation)

College Bookstore Consultants Inc.'s evaluation and recommendations

Solicited, received, and evaluated Request for Information (RFI) responses from

Barnes and Noble College Booksellers

Follett Higher Education Group

Symposium Books

(Harvard/Labyrinth was invited; however, the partnership is not yet formalized and they could not meet deadlines for submission, even with substantial extensions.)

Evaluated typical vendor financial/contractual terms

Net sales contribution

Costs in/out of contribution

Scope and financing of renovating

Conducted preliminary pro / con evaluation of models

Prioritized goals and decision criteria for bookstore

Solicited input from Brown community

Undergraduates

Graduates

Faculty

Medical students

APPENDIX C

Recommended conditions for successful partnership with a vendor

Consulting advice to structure the contract

Oversight board of students and faculty that meet regularly during the year to review customer satisfaction (including pricing), sales results, and programming activities

Commitment that current employees will be offered a competitive salary and benefit package

Agreement to retain current employees in the same or similar jobs for at least a year

Guaranteed commitment on textbook pricing terms (benchmarked)

Design and branding of the store as a Brown institution with virtually no overt vendor signage; store aesthetics that are unique to Brown

Concerted communication effort to explain why Brown made the decision and how it will manage the relationship to the University's benefit

Commitment to work with Brown to certify that vendors abide fair labor practices and to address related labor and environmental concerns and proposals by the Brown community

Recommended conditions for successful self-operation

Oversight board of students and faculty that meet regularly during the year to review customer satisfaction, sales results, and programming, and to provide a "voice of the community"

An experienced college bookstore management team with a strong background in customer service, marketing, and community outreach

Renovation of the store to improve layout, lighting, shelving, and merchandising (guided by experts in bookstore and retail design)

Strategic plan for next five years of operation

Significant participation by Brown administration in the decision-making for renovation and strategic planning

Understanding by employees that changes in operating procedures, marketing strategies, and outreach may be required

Continued effort to abide by Brown's commitment to support the fair labor practices of vendors

APPENDIX D: Peer institutions and operating model

Managed by contract vendor

University of Chicago (Barnes and Noble College Booksellers Inc. – B&N CBI)

Columbia University (B&N CBI)

Dartmouth College (B&N CBI)

Harvard University (B&N CBI)

Johns Hopkins University (B&N CBI)

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (B&N CBI)

Northwestern University (B&N CBI)

University of Pennsylvania (B&N CBI)

Stanford University (Follett)

Yale University (B&N CBI)

Self-operated by university

Brown University

Cornell University

Duke University

Princeton University (cooperative)