

News Release

**NCSU Libraries and Physics Department Partner to Save Students and Families \$\$\$'s**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Raleigh, N.C.)—Two of the most tech-savvy units at North Carolina State University are working together to keep up to \$250,000 in the pockets of students who take introductory physics courses at the school. A unique partnership between the NCSU Libraries and the Department of Physics has made the required textbook for Physics 211 and 212 openly available online to the NC State community.

The traditional physics textbook sells for \$150-\$190; 1300 students take the introductory courses in an average year. The newly adopted text, *Physics Fundamentals* by Dr. Vincent Coletta, is available online through the Libraries' web site to NC State students and faculty. The new e-text arrangement translates into nearly one quarter of a million dollars of potential savings for NC State students and their families.

Although students are increasingly embracing electronic means of learning, the economics of the publishing industry, the desire to pay authors a fair price for their work, and all too often the weight of tradition have made such arrangements rare, even as text prices have escalated as much as 40% in the last five years. Encouraged by the desire of the Physics Department to break the mold, the NCSU Libraries was able to purchase a site license for the digital text for all NC State students, faculty, and staff. Key to the new model was the change in approach by the Physics Department along with the innovative approach to publishing supported by Dr. Coletta and his publisher, *Physics Curriculum & Instruction*. Students who feel most comfortable with hard copy can buy a paper black-and-white version of the e-text at a small additional fee.

“The Physics Department has been concerned for quite some time about rising costs for our students,” says Dr. Michael Paesler, head of the NC State's Department of Physics. “Most notably, of course, are text book prices that can amount to an appreciable fraction of tuition for some students. Dr. Coletta's high-quality electronic text is an excellent solution for our students.”

While the idea originated with faculty members in Physics who were looking for a more sustainable and cost-effective way to provide quality, peer-reviewed textbooks to their students, the initiative to reduce the cost of texts has been a signature theme of University of North Carolina System President Erskine Bowles' administration. NC State Provost Warwick Arden has also underlined and amplified Bowles' commitment to reduce the pressures of rising book costs in recent communications to academic officials at the university.

“Our Digital Scholarship group has long been at the fore of exploring how academics can capitalize on emerging technologies and how those technologies can enhance learning and reduce the costs of higher education,” explains Greg Raschke, associate director for collections and scholarly communication at the NCSU Libraries. “We think this new model is particularly effective for large service courses, where significant enrollments provide good economies of scale and where quality digital textbooks are most readily available.”

Other recent NCSU Libraries' initiatives to reduce costs for students include providing at least one copy of every required course book on reserve each semester (<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reserves/textbooks.html>), supplying online reserves (<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reserves/>) for the electronic dissemination of materials within the bounds of copyright law, and *Library Tools* (<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/course>), an innovative way to use the Libraries' web site to present custom, class-related library content for every course at the university.

“We will monitor student response to the new system carefully and plan to increase our e-text offerings in the fall semester with our Optics course,” adds Professor Paesler.