

# Book Co-op: Volunteering Program Proposal

## Brief History

The Book Co-op was started in 2012 by a few passionate students, and given a space to live in by the Environment Officers (currently opposite the Food Coop).

The Book Co-op has never been formally a part of UMSU - it has never received constant funding - only receiving the odd grant for books and activities from the Environment Department (~\$500 in 2012, ~\$300 in 2013).

In 2015 a motion came to Students' Council to make the Book Co-Op a volunteering program with UMSU.

*The motion read: That Students' Council incorporates that UMSU Book Co-Op as volunteering program of UMSU and recognises Cassandra Prigg as the coordinator of the program. Students Council directs the president to work with the coordinator, the cooperative and other interested student representatives to develop a plan for formally integrating the Book Co Op into UMSU, including reviewing and adopting the Book Co Op policy (or suite of policies), developing a Coordinator Position Description, and determining appropriate coordinator office space and transition arrangements.*

*Students Council authorises expenditure of \$1200 per year (\$100 per month) plus 9.5% superannuation for an honorarium for the coordinator from the Volunteering budget line.*

This motion did not pass Council. The Book Co-Op continued to have control over a space in Union House without any intervention from UMSU.

## Current running and plans

Currently, the Melbourne University Book Co-Op has a [facebook page](#) and a volunteering group. It should be noted that the facebook page, although called the Melbourne Uni Book Co-op has the URL containing UMSU Book Co-Op. They also have a fully functioning bank account and got their float from the MUSUL Finance Department.

Their volunteer base consists of over 100 people, but few are actually engaging with the program on a structured regular basis.

UMSU currently receives at least 1 complaint every 2 weeks about the Book Co-op, mainly regarding opening hours and getting books/money back from the Co-op, which is a concern.

## Other Unions/examples

### [LaTrobe University Student Union](#)

- Has a buy online option, so you can browse what items you require online, then pay for them, then pick them up at the info desk instead of waiting for the book co-op to be open
- They have a second hand book sale agreement which has a fairly good policy with it.

### [Swinburne Co-Op Bookstore](#)

- Entirely done in store

- The bookshop sells selected second-hand textbooks at 33.3% off the current retail price of the new book.
- Second hand books have a yellow “used” sticker on the front, rear and spine of the book
- Books must be the current prescribed edition
- Swinburne has a list of books online that the University prescribes with the author, ISBN, book title, edition, RRP, second hand sell price, and consignment payout. This is mainly for sellers rather than buyers.

#### University of Sydney Student Representative Council

- Runs a buy immediately system as well as a consignment scheme for less demanded text books.
- 40% the RRP cashback when selling and generally 70% when buying
- Has a search function that allows you to see if they have the book from home without coming in. Also has a reservation function.
- Open to all USYD students and the general public
- There is no buy online function, only a search function. You must come in to buy and collect your book.

### **Future options**

#### **Option 1: Discontinue**

Evict the Book Co-op from its current space, and wind up the program.

This would free up that space and it can be used for different resources. It cannot be used as an office space.

#### **Option 2: Continue Running as-is**

The Book Co-op would continue to run with no input from UMSU.

#### **Option 3: Handover the Book Co-op to a Volunteering Programme**

*For Option 3, Council would need to consider the following:*

- Having an entirely online book selling program or a shop front book co-op or an amalgamation of the two
- A consignment scheme or does UMSU have the ability to buy textbooks immediately?
- Location of the Book Co-Op, this could differ dependent on an online program
- Eligibility of people to sell books (Just students? Students and ex-students? The general public?)
- Reimbursable levels (UMSU would take a cut of book sales to ensure the program is cost neutral - how much should this be?)
- Name of program
- The creation of a directorship (How much honoraria? 1 or 2 directors?)

#### **Pros of online system**

- Less reliance on students being available to volunteer at peak hours. This is one of the key issues with the current running of the Book Coop.
- Students can browse from home
- No cash handling issues - all cash is handled online
- Students who are selling their books can get cash in their accounts as soon as book is sold

### **Cons of online system**

- Lack of browsing/book shop feel. This could be mitigated with having a new or keeping the old space.
- Less social interaction for volunteers

### **Recommendations**

Due to the current state of the program, it is not viable to continue the program as it currently runs. However, buying and selling used textbooks is a vital service for students, and as such, it is recommended that Students' Council approve the following.

It is recommended that Students' Council ask the General Manager and General Secretary to prepare a proposed operating framework to support the operation of the Book Co-op as an UMSU Volunteer Program.

This framework will then be presented to Students' Council for their approval, amendments or rejection.