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## IWU Welcomes New Bookstore Manager

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## **IWU Welcomes New Bookstore Manager**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Born and raised in the Bloomington-Normal area, Thad Sutter has returned to the community as the manager of Illinois Wesleyan University's bookstore after several years of employment at three different university bookstores. Sutter began work at IWU on Oct. 30.

"I'm glad to be back in Bloomington-Normal, everyone has been really friendly," Sutter said. Sutter replaces Ami Mitra, who left for another career opportunity. Mitra was the bookstore manager for five years.

A 1987 graduate of Normal Community High School, Sutter graduated from the University of Illinois in 1992 with a degree in agriculture communications. While studying at the U of I, Sutter worked in the university bookstore. When Sutter's boss at the U of I bookstore was hired at Illinois State University to manage its bookstore, Sutter followed him upon his graduation.

After several years at ISU, Sutter was hired as the textbook manager at the Northwestern University bookstore. Because Northwestern University's bookstore is located off campus, a major emphasis was placed on customer service, and building a strong relationship with the faculty, two qualities that IWU was looking for in their new bookstore manager.

While on vacation, Sutter read an advertisement for the bookstore manager position at IWU in the Bloomington Pantagraph.

"I thought this would be a great opportunity for me," he said. "I could move up in my career and also move back to the town that I enjoyed growing up in."

Last year a search committee of seven administrators, faculty and students began looking at whether the university wanted to lease out the IWU bookstore to a bookstore company or to remain operated by the university. After deciding that they wanted the bookstore to remain operated by an IWU official, they began a rigorous search process.

Ken Browning, vice president of business and finance, said a private bookstore manager would, "better reflect IWU personalities and desires, as well as help us control our own destiny." Browning also mentioned that once the hiring process began, everyone agreed that Sutter was the perfect candidate. "We wanted someone with a considerable amount of textbook selling experience, as well as someone who could sell trade books, which is something we want to start getting into once the bookstore moves to the Hansen Student Center next year."

Although managing a bookstore was not a part of Sutter's original education, it has become something that he enjoys. When visiting other towns he likes to check out the nearest college or university and see how they are organized and try to get ideas.

Sutter thinks working at a smaller, liberal arts institution such as IWU will prove to be exciting.

"When you are at a smaller campus, the accountability factor is much more immediate. I think my time at Northwestern University will help me out because larger university bookstores have to deal with competition, and that has taught me to be more detail oriented," Sutter said. I want to be able to provide the same service here that I provided at Northwestern."

Sutter also developing new ideas to promote the IWU bookstore and its services. He said that he is relying heavily on his student workers to help come up with promotional ideas.

"I think the students are a great resource. Some of the best ideas I've ever seen have come from students," Sutter said.

Sutter expects to face new challenges while working at the IWU bookstore. Upon the completion of the \$6 million Hanson Student Center, Sutter will assist in making the move from the bookstore's present location to the new location. Once Sutter manages the January textbook purchasing season, he will start to commit a lot more time to planning the new facility. However, he already has developed plans to make the move as smooth as possible and looks forward to hosting events with the additional space the bookstore will acquire.

"Once we move into the new facility, I hope to have a late-night promotion every fall with games and prizes," Sutter said. He also wants to tie in bookstore programs to campus events, like having books in-stock that are authored by campus guest speakers.

Sutter will, however, continue to face the existing challenges associated with bookstore management, especially book buy-backs at the end of the semester.

At the end of each semester students hope that the campus bookstore will buy back their used textbooks, so that the bookstore can resell them. Ideally, the book buy-back is a process that works well for the students because they get a return on their original purchase, and also for the bookstore because they can resell the same book in the next semester at a low cost to students.

"Economics dictate that. If a textbook is not going to be used again," said Sutter, "than the bookstore can try to sell the book back to the supplier, or perhaps another bookstore, but there are no guarantees. Even if the bookstore can sell the book back to the supplier, it will be for a fraction of the original cost." Sutter said, "The key is educating students and faculty about the process."

The IWU Bookstore is located at 1207 1/2 N. Main St., Bloomington. It is open seven days a week, grossing approximately \$1.1 million a year selling textbooks, IWU clothing, IWU jewelry and gift items, as well as office supplies, CDs and greeting cards.

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