

# GOERINGS BOOK STORE COLLEGE PARK

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## Press Release

Sadly, Goerings Book Store will be closing sometime in the next two months. We would have celebrated our thirty-ninth birthday in the fall of 2010. Originally located at University and Thirteenth, the store was for a few years a Little Professor Book Center franchise owned and operated by Harvey and Viola Goering. Under the present ownership, the name was changed a few years later to Goerings Book Store.

The store prospered at University and Thirteenth for many years. We began stocking books for classes offered in the Colleges of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Fine Arts, and Education. The trade portion of our business also flourished. We provided an array of customer services which other stores in town weren't, among them special ordering and free gift-wrapping. And we took advantage of out-of-store opportunities. Our staff has enjoyed hosting author events, our Storybook Hour, and other 'happenings.'

The six current staff members at Goerings, plus four former employees, represent 265 years of bookselling experience and a knowledge of books and the book business that is irreplaceable. Add to that expertise the many years of fine student help that we have had. Our reputation throughout north Florida and with visitors to the University was based on an impressive selection of university

presses and “mid-list” books. Science, paperback fiction, art, architecture, history, religion, criticism, and current affairs were our stronger sections. Goerings Book Store always had and still has a good children’s section. We’re ‘local.’ We have a large selection of books on Florida and have made it our policy to stock books by local authors.

Ten years ago the Methodist Church next door, our landlord for most of those years at University & Thirteenth, decided to redevelop the church property. Forced to relocate, we split the store, moving the textbook operation to our present location on NW 1st Avenue and the trade store to the Westgate shopping center.

The Westgate store was a fabulous place. But unfortunately within a few months of the move, a second Books-a-Million and a Borders opened less than two miles away. We felt the effects of too much chain-store competition. Our existence at Westgate was also complicated by the Department of Transportation’s limiting our customers’ access from West University Avenue and 34th Street.

We might have been able to fall back on our textbook business, but it was reshaped by market interventions on the part of the state legislature and the UF provost’s office. Two years ago, to facilitate internet competition, the state legislature passed a law requiring faculty at state universities and community colleges to post their textbook adoptions 30 days prior to the beginning of classes. That forced us into direct competition with Follett Education Resources, a 850+ book store chain that operates the ‘official’ UF book store in the Reitz union.

The 30-day requirement was, however, not enough lead time for the Follett to compete with us for our business. Coming to its aid, the provost’s office ordered all faculty to post their books three to five months in advance of the first day of class. It threatened to impose group fines on departments whose faculty continued to use Goerings and other off-campus competition. We were no longer able to take full responsibility for stocking UF course requirements.

It is hard to quantify the impact on local retailing of internet competition. The convenience of getting books by mail and the substantial tax advantages that Amazon.com and its customers enjoy began, we believe, to make a difference three years ago.

Facing difficulties in both the textbook and trade operations, we consolidated our stores in College Park. Two blocks from the heart of the campus, the College Park store would seem to be well located. The neighborhood is a good place for restaurants, bars, and gator shops. But not trade book stores. More recently our sales have been severely affected by the 'great recession.' It has become obvious at this point that an independent trade book store like Goerings Book Store was no longer possible in the Gainesville market.

But, hey, we survived for thirty-eight years by meeting adverse market situations and by having wonderful, loyal customers.

Elizabeth Rainbow    Thomas Rider    Co-owners.