

## ***Accounting Students' Perception of an Interactive Textbook***

**Joseph E. Trainor, St. John's University - New York**  
**Cynthia R. Phillips, St. John's University - New York**

### **ABSTRACT**

Advancements in technology over the last decade have transformed many aspects of our society. One needs only to examine the taxi-car industry to appreciate how the culmination of affordable mobile Internet access and the smartphone has changed the ride-hailing business. Higher education is not immune to the effects of technology. Publishers, software manufacturers, app developers, digital media providers, and others have made significant investments in higher education technologies. These investments seek to provide educators with academic technologies to enhance the learning experience and improve student learning. A recent and growing addition in academic-technology offerings are *interactive textbooks*.

Interactive textbooks leverage technology to expand an online textbook from a static online version of the traditional hardcover textbook, into a multi-media active learning experience. Many of these interactive textbooks allow students to learn at their own pace, highlight areas of the textbook to focus student attention on the main points, and provide feedback loops to test and enhance students' mastery of the subject matter. The publishers of these interactive tools claim that their products help maximize students' time spent with the course textbook by testing key concepts and pinpointing those topics on which students need to focus their study time. Improved grades and improved preparedness have also been espoused by the publishers as benefits. Although academic evidence regarding interactive textbooks is limited, the existing evidence suggests that interactive textbooks in introductory STEM courses improve student performance on exams. The improvements were especially noted for students that struggled with understanding important concepts. We are not aware of any prior research examining students' perceptions of this interactive learning technology.

Our research examines the role of interactive textbook applications in higher education. Specifically, we examine the perceptions of accounting students enrolled in courses that incorporate an interactive textbook as part of the curriculum. The main findings of our survey suggest that students perceive greater understanding of course content, greater focus on the most important parts of the textbook, and greater overall satisfaction with an interactive textbook over a traditional e-book. The results also suggest that some students have concerns about the iterative nature and time required to complete the assignments. We present recommendations for incorporating interactive textbooks into an overall teaching strategy that provides opportunity for active learning both inside and outside the classroom.