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Some Boston-area college bookstores ban Rolling Stone issue featuring Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev cover

Posted by Matt Rocheleau July 19, 2013 04:34 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Globe Correspondent

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College bookstores in Boston and surrounding communities have reacted differently as they handle Friday's release of the latest issue of Rolling Stone magazine, which features a controversial cover showing the face of accused Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

Some local campus stores will not sell the magazine issue at all. Some will keep a stock hidden and available by request only. Others will allow the copies to be sold and displayed as they usually are.

Northeastern University tweeted Thursday afternoon that it had pulled the issue from its bookstore. A spokeswoman there Friday, confirmed the copies had been removed from the store's shelves.

The head of the campus bookstore at the University of Massachusetts Amherst said Friday that his shop plans to send back any shipments of the magazine's August issue.

"We're not going to have it on the shelf," store director Ken Kahler said by phone Friday. "We'll just return it to [the distributor]."

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phone Friday. We'll just return it to [the distributor.]

A supervisor from Boston University's bookstore said by phone Friday that the issue will be in stock at the store and available to purchase, but it won't be displayed anywhere in plain sight.

"If someone specifically asks for it, we will get them a copy," said the supervisor, who declined to give their name. "But, we will not have it in the out and open."

The Coop at Harvard and MIT issued a statement Friday saying the store will sell the magazine as it normally does even though shop management opposes the cover of the August issue.

"We think Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is a despicable human being and we do not agree with Rolling Stone Magazine's decision to feature his picture on their front cover," the store said in a statement.

"However, the Coop operates in an academic community where it is expected that there will be free expression on any topic, issue or point of view," the statement continued. "We periodically receive feedback requesting that we do not offer certain titles or books by certain authors or on certain topics or controversial subjects. It has been our policy to not edit or censor our offerings. We believe to do so would set a bad precedent.


"So, consistent with our practice, the Coop will offer the next edition of Rolling Stone Magazine as we believe our patrons will make their own decision to purchase or not purchase the magazine," the statement concluded."


The website of the Standard-Times of New Bedford [reported Friday](#) that the magazine will also not be carried at the bookstore on the UMass Dartmouth campus, where Tsarnaev was a student.

Officials reached Friday at UMass Dartmouth could not immediately confirm the Standard-Times' report that the issue won't be carried at that campus' bookstore.

The magazine issue's cover, images of which were released online this week ahead of the issue's scheduled print release Friday, has been [heavily criticized](#) – including by bombing victims, first responders and public officials – as being

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tasteless. Merchants including CVS, Walgreens, Roche Bros., Tedeschi's, Cumberland Farms, Stop & Shop, and Shaw's, have vowed to keep the issue off their shelves while many have said they will refuse to buy the magazine.

Some have said they feel the cover glorifies the alleged terrorist and could provide added incentive for potential copy-cats. The magazine and others have defended the cover.

"The fact that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is young, and in the same age group as many of our readers, makes it all the more important for us to examine the complexities of this issue and gain a more complete understanding of how a tragedy like this happens," the publication said in a statement.


Officials at the bookstores at UMass Boston and Boston College could not be reached on Friday afternoon. Both stores had already closed for the day when contacted.

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