1378 Lincoln Ave
San Jose, CA 95125

June 12, 2012

John Read
Chief Litigation III Section
Antitrust Division
U.S. Department of Justice
450 5th Street, NW, Suite 4000
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Mr. Read,

Subject: The importance of agency model for ebook pricing

I've worked in independent bookstores for over thirty years and seen the inevitable changes in the market over that time. Amazon had a great idea – to make books available online - I cannot argue with that. What concerns me is the predatory marketing by a corporation with deep pockets – one who continues to insist on unfair business practices that end up gutting local economies through their unwillingness to collect sales tax, and ability to eliminate competition through below cost pricing. The agency model for ebook pricing allows more stores and publishers of varying outlooks, preferences and passions to have a chance at being in existence as an alternative.

I could not believe more strongly that the agency model has been good for independent bookstores, good for publishing, and, most importantly, good for readers and book buyers. Since its introduction, the agency model has corrected a distortion in the market fostered by below-cost pricing, predominantly led by Amazon.com, the ultimate result of which is to reduce or to eliminate competition among both retailers and publishers.

If the agency model goes away for a significant period of time, there is every reason to believe that Amazon will again price below cost and increase its e-book market share. This can only be bad news for the reading public, resulting in a cultural landscape offering a far less diverse range of titles being published and a much-diminished range of publishers.

Please know that the agency model is an important element in keeping our diverse marketplace of ideas and opinions vibrant and alive.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Ann Seaton
Hicklebee's Bookstore
Manager