

Jane Stroh  
The Bookstore  
475 N Main St.  
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

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LITIGATION III, ANTITRUST DIV  
U.S. DEPT OF JUSTICE

May 20, 2012

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

Dear Sir,

I have been in the book selling business for over 25 years, all of those years in a small independent bookstore. In 1997, in spite of the economics, I decided to buy this store. In that time I have seen the industry change in dramatic ways, most of those not good for the small independent. The movie, You've Got Mail, with Meg Ryan comes to mind.

From the first discounters, to the big box stores, to the on-line competition the landscape continues to evolve. The independents that have survived continue to get better at the business side of things. Our trade association, The American Booksellers Association, has helped us to advocate for a level playing field for all.

Publishers have also begun to realize the value of small bookstores where staff have actually read books, care about and contribute to their communities, support literacy and generally care more about people reading than about making money. My understanding is that agency pricing in regard to e-books was an idea that developed to allow small independent bookstores to be able to compete fairly with Amazon. Because Amazon has huge resources not available to the local independent bookseller, they can obviously undercut e-book prices and take a loss on those sales in order to maintain and grow market share. My understanding of agency model pricing is that it was developed, not to price fix, but to allow small independents to have a level playing field in which to compete with Amazon.

I would argue that books are not just another commodity to be bought and sold at the cheapest price by the biggest guy on the block. Literacy is at the very heart and foundation of our country and without a literate population we are doomed. I think small independent bookstores contribute far more than Amazon ever will to a literate population. If every person in America quit reading tomorrow, Amazon would just focus on selling refrigerators instead of books.

It is therefore very disappointing to me that my government has chosen to involve itself in this sort of battle and to champion the big guy over the small independent business.

Sincerely,

  
Jane Stroh