

Judith Dollenmayer / 73 Raymond Avenue / Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
jdollenmay[REDACTED]

June 22, 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:

I write as an independent scholar, avid reader, consumer of books in both print and electronic formats, and Amazon Kindle owner -- urging you to abandon the proposed lawsuit against Apple and five big publishers for "a conspiracy to raise, fix and stabilize retail prices." My argument is that such a lawsuit is not remotely a remedy for the threat to a healthy, multi-center U.S. publishing industry.

That threat is far more Amazon's policies than the publishers' brave attempt, led by the late John Sargent, to preserve book pricing that reflects the true cost of book production. Producing a literary product, whether its final form is paper or electronic, depends on a long chain of workers: from authors to agents, editors, copyeditors, designers, salespersons, publicists, ad reps, and brick-and-mortar bookstores. The economic problem is not the major publishers or Apple, who remain willing to compete in a fair market, but the aggressive underpricing and monopoly-seeking practices of Amazon. If your lawsuit goes forward, in effect Amazon will have won decisively and the industry as a whole will have lost. Lost what? Not only its ability to recoup the costs of finding and producing a variety of works from multiple sources, but its ability to continue issuing any but the most commercial blockbuster "sure things."

It is, I think, always a terrible idea to restrict an industry to the model that cuts costs most and most reduces the number of market competitors – in this case, in the market for creative works of fiction and nonfiction. It seems clear that Amazon intends to dominate the entire production chain for such works; indeed, my guess is to become a gigantic publisher as well as bookseller. That can't be good for American intellectual life, much less the industry, which stands to be reduced, at worst, to a monster Amazonian plus relatively low-budget scholarly presses.

I appreciate this opportunity to offer comment, and urge DoJ to abandon this ill-conceived lawsuit.

Sincerely,

Judith Dollenmayer

Cc: Email to john.read@usdoj.gov. bcc: Politics & Prose owners, Washington DC