

**From:** bethannspend[REDACTED] [mailto:bethannspend[REDACTED]] **On Behalf Of** Beth Ann Spencer  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 24, 2012 7:34 PM  
**To:** Read, John [John.Read@ATR.USDOJ.gov]  
**Subject:** There is Amazon and then there is me

Dear Mr. Read:

I am the editor of a very small press that publishes poetry and literary short fiction by authors in the western United States. I have been doing this work for nearly twenty years and am very proud of the books I have edited, designed, and published at Bear Star Press. (The fiction collections are all available as e-books for the Apple iPad readers, the Kindle, and a host of other mobile devices. Traditional publishing has been forever changed by the onset of digital editions and I'd be the last to argue e-books are a bad thing.) Though I sell print books and e-books on Amazon, I do so reluctantly. From the start, Amazon has used books as loss leaders to sell Kindles and washing machines and every other thing under the sun. This has led to the failure of mom-and-pop businesses all across America, and also to the loss of a great number on independent bookstores. Amazon has been eroding its competition from day 1, and it wasn't until Apple and several publishers joined forces to make books available online somewhere besides Amazon that any real challenge to its market monopoly existed.

That is why it saddens me that the Department of Justice has decided to sue Apple and a few traditional publishers for what amounts to a desperate attempt to remain competitive with the Amazon. I have read everything I can on this issue and nothing I have yet come across has persuaded me that Apple and Penguin et al. have colluded to fix prices, at least not in the way I understand the term. Certainly some the publishers have talked with each other about the best ways to resist Amazon's clout in the marketplace. They would be foolish if they hadn't. But that is not collusion, it's common sense. It seems to me that Amazon, which has revenues greater than those of all of its competitors combined, is the player not to be trusted. Book industry expert Steve Wasserman has an essay in *The Nation* (<http://www.thenation.com/article/168125/amazon-effect>) that lays the issue out more effectively than I can do here, and I hope you read it. Please, if you can, also read Ken Auletta's essay "Paper Trail" in the June 25th *New Yorker* as well (there is no available link to it, alas).

Thank you for your attention. I will be following this case carefully in the months to come.

Yours for a vibrant literary culture in America,

Beth