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☎: 510.528.3254 ☎: 510.528.0682

e: admin@pegasusbookstore.com

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

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

Mr. Read,

May 3, 2012

I am writing to voice my dismay at the civil suit filed by the Department of Justice against Apple and five major publishers with agency model pricing for e-books.

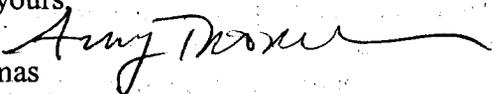
I have been a bookseller for more than thirty years, in Berkeley and Oakland. I have used every stratagem I can devise to compete in an increasingly discount-driven economy, fostered in large part by a single large corporation, Amazon, whose appetite for growth and domination seems to know no bounds. But one can't live on air. Writers, publishers, editors, marketers, printers, booksellers, salespeople – these are necessary functions to the creation and dissemination of books. Whether or not the book is sold digitally or in print form, the producers must be paid for their work. The below-cost strategy of Amazon, combined with its aggressive tax-avoidance strategy, has created a huge distortion in the market.

The agency model, discussed openly for years by all parties as a possible solution, has been a creative and fair model that has been good for our industry. Good for stores like mine — bricks-and-mortar in real neighborhoods with a vibrant presence online — good for publishing, for authors, and, most importantly, good for readers and book buyers.

Since the introduction of the agency model, many more independent booksellers, including mine, are selling e-books, and those sales have shown steady growth. The agency model has lowered prices to indie bookstore customers, and indies themselves have seen significantly increased price competition among publishers in regard to promotions, discounts, and special offers, all of which have allowed bricks-and-mortar bookstores to offer customers a wider array of titles at a greater value.

In short, since the introduction of the agency model, the e-book market for consumers has become far more competitive — not less so! Please do not continue to help Amazon proceed with its single-minded mission to use books and publishing to create its own retail juggernaut.

Sincerely yours


Amy Thomas
President,
Pandora's Books, Inc.