

« Headlines



Agents pick sides on Hachette v Amazon

13.06.08 [Benedicte Page](#)

The author and agent community has backed Hachette Livre UK in its terms dispute with Amazon, with leading agents spearheading a backlash against the online retailer.

The dispute has seen Amazon remove its "Buy new" button from key Hachette front and backlist titles, and drop books from promotional positions. In a letter sent to agents and authors last week, Hachette c.e.o. Tim Hely Hutchinson said he would stand firm against conceding additional trading terms, and asked authors for their patience.

He said Amazon's sanctions were "creating a breach of trust between Amazon and its customers", and its actions could "prove to be a catalyst for Amazon starting to lose its popularity with the public". Despite advantageous terms, he said, "Amazon seems each year to go from one publisher to another making increasing demands in order to achieve richer terms at our expense and sometimes at yours." At its current rate of growth, he predicted that Amazon would become the largest bookseller in Britain in three years.

Curtis Brown m.d. Jonathan Lloyd said: "I think the entire industry of publishers, authors and agents are 100% behind [Hachette]. Someone has to draw a line in the sand. Publishers have given 1% a year away to retailers, so where does it stop? Using authors as a financial football is disgraceful."

Clare Alexander of Aitken Alexander added: "This is a disturbing glimpse of the iron in Amazon's soul. I think its ruthlessness in bargaining is extremely disturbing." Derek Johns of A P Watt said: "I consider [Amazon's] attitude to terms is predatory and I entirely support Tim."

The m.d. of a rival publisher said: "Taking the 'Buy' button down is the equivalent of going to a bookseller on the high street and saying, 'Can I buy that book?', and them saying, 'No.' It's disgraceful." Another added: "Publishers are thinking, 'Thank God it's Tim and not me.'"

Hachette has also received author support. Headline novelist Emma Darwin said on her blog she supported the move, "and hope I shall be unselfish enough to keep doing so even if my own sales are affected. This is about whether Amazon can be allowed to exploit its near-monopoly."

Lloyd said it was "bloody difficult" for authors affected. "What I'm saying to Hachette is, 'I understand and support the principle, but with the books that have been delisted on Amazon, you've got to sell more to other online retailers.'"

An Amazon spokesman said: "[We are] totally committed to offering the broadest selection of titles possible, both through our retail offering and through Amazon Marketplace. Amazon.co.uk is

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By Clive Keeble

Not sure that (Jonathan) Lloyd understands the situation : Amazon have totally de-stabilised the market for new book sales in this country. It is not just a question of opening another tap to ensure that his author's get their sales. For too long publishers have buried their heads in the sand and given away more and more to Amazon who like certain supermarkets wish to ensure that their customers get offered the lowest prices without considering the damage their tactics are causing and that somebody somewhere has to make a profit for business to survive. Printers have been forced into closure in this country as publishers increasingly have tried to save a penny here and a penny here only to give it away to the likes of Amazon so they can boast lowest prices. On a more or less daily basis titles are cover price inflated above original publishers notional rrp on AI's because somebody is demanding extra discount. Book prices in this country, for similar editions, are in many cases near twice the US price. Unless the publishers collectively wake up to the situation then there are only to be left with a few outlets for sales. These words are from my heart. Tim Hely Hutchinson deserves full support from all sectors of the booktrade.

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By June Austin

I agree 100 percent. The reason that cover prices are so high is because no one pays them anymore - publishers know that 50 percent of say £10.99 is a damned site more than 50 percent of £5.99, and so the cover price goes up to make sure they cover their costs. It is time to stand up to these bullies, and only someone of Hachette's size can do this. I am with them 100 percent and am glad to see that their authors also appear to be so, and think of long term gain rather than pain ! When I said earlier in the week that horses and Amazon had one thing in common (s***) I wasn't joking

[Unsuitable?](#)

By Michael Furey

Amazon is the WalMart of the space - they have been bullying publishers for years and have engendered so much ill will that it

is only a matter of time before there will be a revolt to accepting their predatory practices. Book buyers should learn to start buying from the publishers directly, and also from independent book stores if they want to keep the industry alive. Stand strong Hachette! Other publishers will join you eventually.

Unsuitable?

By Jay Mandal

I wonder if Amazon would have to revise its strategy if something akin to public lending right was applied to Marketplace. After all, it's unfair that neither the author nor the publisher benefits from the sale of secondhand books.

Unsuitable?

By Ron

Poor Tim Hely Hutchison. Maybe he and Jonathan Lloyd will have take human salaries and pensions instead of interstellar ones. It's hard to feel sorry for big publishers, I'm afraid. They gamble on other people's hard work and talent - sometimes they win and sometimes they lose. We work in a market place dearies, not a public service. Amazon have invested hugely-- they have to try to keep their shareholders happy. One has to say that, for the book trade, these Amazon owners have been very honourable shareholders, rather more honourable than some investors in publishing. Weep not for publishers and agents.

Unsuitable?