

From: Cole's Bookstore
Sent: 07 January 2006
To: Alan Shearman
Subject: Waterstone's / Ottakar's takeover

Dear Sir,

I will be brief - I write as the owner of a single branch bookshop, having been in business for 12 years.

We are already struggling to stay afloat given the intense competition from the supermarkets and the internet. Our sales are falling, our margins being eroded and costs rising quickly, principally rent / rates / energy.

A combined Waterstone's / Ottakar's with the power they would wield could be the final nail in the coffin of many independents. As the operators of a very successful business their aim must surely be to ever increase their market share. The easiest targets for them are the independents.

Speaking as a consumer (I still visit bookshops when I travel - it's a disease for many people!) I think it would be very sad if we hasten the demise of yet more small shops by allowing this takeover. Once destroyed they will never return.

Thank you, I trust you will deliberate carefully.

Bill Shepard

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