

Amazon: A Physical Bookstore

Cory Schulman

Amazon, the on-line disrupter of the retail industry, has opened its first Washington, DC based physical bookstore. “Amazon Books.” The two-story structure, once occupied by rival bookseller Barnes & Noble, spans 10,000 square feet and provides a coffee bar, a children’s section and more than 5,000 book titles.

After opening just a couple of weeks ago, the store still teems with customers abuzz with intrigue over the thousands of new books, accompanied by showcases of the latest electronic gadgetry, offbeat toys and whimsical gift merchandise.



One visual difference from other bookstores is that all of the book covers face outward rather than filed with just the binding showing. The most striking differences, however, are the elimination of cashiers, cash, and check-out lines.



Amazon’s approach to the in-person purchasing experience has raised the bar for other traditional retailers by using modern cell-phone and app technologies.

After downloading the Amazon Go app, the patron uses a scan key to enter the store. This app also enables the patron to scan items for pricing as well as purchase items by simply removing the item from the shelf and walking out of the store. No check-out line to wait in and no cashier either.

For a limited time, however, the store is currently using the traditional cashier method for purchases and allowing entry without the scan key until their system is in place and the transactional culture is understood by the public.

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According to a company representative, Amazon is planning to open a second location in Bethesda, Maryland.

Amazon's entry into the physical retail locations poses a question whether this is going to be good for the book industry. Will they put other big-box chains out of business or impact the Indie bookstores? Or will their presence stimulate more interest in physical books, which seem to be fighting obsolescence from the popularity of ebooks. Good or bad, Amazon is changing the transactional experience through technology and culture, which will most likely spread throughout the retail industry. Who likes waiting in lines? That's a change we've all been waiting for.



Cory Schulman can be reached at BestSellerPublications.com, a book publishing company in Maryland.