

Hachette pushes back after Amazon alleges price fixing

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Hachette Book Group defended itself Sunday against accusations of pushing up prices for e-books amid a simmering dispute with online retail giant Amazon.

"Hachette sets prices for our books entirely on our own, not in collusion with anyone," the American head of the [publishing group](#), Michael Pietsch, wrote in a [letter](#) to readers shared with AFP.

The letter will be sent to anyone who emails Pietsch, Hachette said, after Pietsch's [email address](#) was published by Amazon, in a bid to pressure the publishing company over the price battle.

Amazon's move came after more than 900 authors signed a letter urging the US online giant to end its battle with Hachette.

In his letter, the Hachette chief swung back at the company.

"This dispute started because Amazon is seeking a lot more profit and even more market share, at the expense of authors, bricks and mortar bookstores, and ourselves," he argued.

While he acknowledged that both companies are "big businesses," he argued Hachette believes "in a [book industry](#) where talent is respected and choice continues to be offered to the reading public."

Amazon says it wants to set a \$9.99 price for most e-books, compared to

\$12.99 to \$19.99 currently, arguing the lack of printing, stocking and shipping costs for e-books should make them less expensive than traditional printed books.

The online retailer said its proposal to Hachette is to give 35 percent of e-book revenue to authors, another 35 percent to the publisher and then keep the remaining 30 percent as its share.

Among other moves to pressure the book publisher, Amazon has reduced its Hachette stock and stopped taking pre-orders for the authors it edits.

But in his letter, Pietsch said his company sets "our e-book prices far below corresponding print book prices, reflecting savings in manufacturing and shipping."

"More than 80 percent of the e-books we publish are priced at \$9.99 or lower," he noted, adding that "we know by experience that there is not one appropriate price for all e-books, and that all e-[books](#) do not belong in the same \$9.99 box."

Book publishers invest sometimes years worth of work before a book comes out, he said, including "editing, design, production, marketing, shipping, piracy protection and more."

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