

Dear Members and Friends,

We have both exciting news and sad news to share with you.

Rumors have circulated over the past several months that Talking Leaves is closing, due in part to an ongoing inventory reduction experiment at our original Main Street location. We have recently decided to close the Main Street store after 42 years in University Heights. Significant changes in book buying habits and in the UB neighborhood are major factors in this decision.

The good, exciting news is that our Elmwood location is staying open. The somewhat reduced inventory there in the wake of the holidays, and a slowed ordering process brought on by our new inventory/POS system, have apparently led some to believe we are shutting down the Elmwood store—THIS IS NOT TRUE. We are consolidating to that location, with a renewed focus on a resurgent future that incorporates all that bookselling in the 21st century entails. We will continue our many partnerships with cultural organizations, schools and other community groups to sponsor readings, conversations, and other events, and to bring books out of the store and into the community.

We know that you, our members and customers, are attentive and savvy readers, well aware that the last decade has been a challenging one for book retailers, and that we have not been immune from the challenges. There have been national and regional economic downturns. There are the actual and obvious rising costs of books, rent, staffing, insurance, and the like. There are changing reading habits shaped by the time constraints of family obligations and by omnipresent and ever changing, constantly updating personal technologies. And there is the virtual price that all small businesses are paying due to on-line shopping and the predatory behavior of a company that started as just another bookselling competitor but has become an enemy to all independent businesses and brick and mortar retailers. Amazon's clear quest for retail domination, often employing dubious ethical, moral and legal tactics, poses the most serious threat to the fabric of communities and neighborhoods around the country and world.

We admit, we have been slow to adapt to some of these changes. The Main Street store, particularly, was conceived in a different era, when people had more time to browse and a deep, wide, and varied inventory was desirable. It was a slow food store in a fast food world, and though slow food may be making a comeback, slow retail is having a more difficult time.

As we consolidate and strengthen our presence as ambassadors of book culture to this community, we will address these issues and concerns. We will be adding on-line shopping to our soon-to-be updated website. We are also considering adding delivery for our customers who are shut-ins or who are unable to get to the store. Please let us know what you think about these ideas.

What will not change is the vision, purpose and goal that inspired us when we opened in 1975. We envisioned establishing a place where the community of readers and writers in Buffalo could find the best writing and reading, both classic and contemporary, bound into print. We wanted to provide a space where books and the ideas and issues contained therein could be engaged with privately and discussed publicly, a space where readers and writers could meet, converse, and engage. From our inception we featured books from small, independent and university presses and we gave prominent space to the diverse voices of the many underrepresented or ignored communities that make up our world. We will continue to do so.

Part of our renewed focus is to better engage you in this store and in the movement to maintain and sustain a vibrant local independent economy. A community is only as strong as the resources that physically reside in it. We welcome your suggestions to make us a better bookstore, one that will be around for another 40 years.

Many of you have been with us since the beginning, and many more have joined as members and/or valued customers over the years of our growth and expansion across town. We are eternally grateful for all the support and sustenance and encouragement we've received over the years from all of you. We hope you will continue your support as we begin a new chapter with anticipation, excitement, and resolve.