



Think Twice Before You Click “Add to Cart”

By my count, at least 17 retail businesses—both local and chain—have closed (or are about to) since the first of the year. I know of several others that are on the precipice.

Some pundits say the reason that so many businesses are going bust is because more IU students are living downtown. To my mind this theory doesn't hold water because it's not just downtown businesses that are failing. The culprits, I believe, are the economy, of course, and the Internet.

There's no question that more people are buying merchandise online. Just ask your UPS driver how much of his/her payload is coming from Amazon and other virtual stores. Internet shopping is a fact of life in the 21st century, here and everywhere, and it's probably going to get worse.

“Worse,” I say, if you are someone who, like me, wants to leaf through a book, bounce up and down on a couch, or try on a pair of shoes before buying. Inevitably, the number of stores worldwide, nationwide, and in Bloomington is going to diminish.

To exacerbate the situation, some shoppers have found a way of bouncing on that couch and still getting the tax-free lower price online. They go into a local store, try out the merchandise, take a picture with their cell phone, and get the name of the manufacturer. They then find the same product online and buy it from a supplier who doesn't have a retail-space rent to pay, or local taxes, or a sales staff to support. Believe me, many people are doing this, right here in Bloomington. And all that cash is leaving town.

The consequences of rampant online shopping on quality of life are profound: fewer local shops, more unemployment, more foreclosures, less money for education and social programs, less money all around. Ultimately, the diminishing of our town.

So please, think twice before you decide to click “Add to Cart.”

It's a Wonderful Town

This is the 30th edition of *Bloom*, marking the end of our 5th year of publication. We will be celebrating that anniversary in our August/September 2011 issue.

Our cover story for that landmark issue is, “It's A Wonderful Town,” the content of which I think will surprise and delight most people.

Many local businesses and IU schools are ordering large numbers of the magazine to use for recruitment, for visitors, to welcome newcomers to our community, and for other purposes. They plan to utilize the magazine for years to come. Consequently, we will be increasing the number of issues we print from 12,000 to at least 20,000 and probably more.

It will be our largest issue in terms of pages, distribution, and shelf life. Look for it at a local business near you on August 10.

Malcolm Abrams
editor and publisher