

Another factor in war of words

From over on Southfield Road in Beverly Hills, Borders Book Shop general manager Elizabeth Sims is aware of the tension at Telegraph and Maple.

"I would have some concern for them," Sims says of Metro News Center. "We aren't so much in direct competition. We'll send folks over for their magazines. It's been a friendly relationship."

But Sims is also aware that there'll be another book giant for Borders, perhaps the original book giant, to contend with.

"We're here and we know our customers," she said. "But we're not just going to rest on our loyal customer base. We're going to continue our program to be the best that we can be."

She said she'll concentrate on increasing the store's community involvement. Look for Borders to do more to support literacy drives and present more readings and signings at the bookstore, Sims said.

—Judith Doner Berne

Store

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"There's not another bookstore in town that has the 4,000 magazines we have," Weiss said. "They may have more books, but we have more magazines. Come to think of it, they won't even have more books. They'll just have more copies. I may have 10 copies of a certain book, and they'll have 100 copies. The difference is, in this store, somebody has read that book. In their store, that won't happen."

Service, selection

The store's customers agree that it will be hard for Barnes and Noble to compete with the service and selection at Metro News.

"I've been in the Barnes and Noble in New York, and it's like going to Kmart to get a book," said Paula Freedman of West Bloomfield. "There are people here to help you. If you want best sellers, you go to Barnes and Noble. If you want information, you come here."

"Anytime I've been looking for something, I've been able to find it here," said Lindsey Ohlinger of Bloomfield Hills.

Other customers said they would shop around.

"I'll probably shop at both," said Donna Dennis of Bloomfield Township. "Barnes and Noble has good hours, so you can go there after the traditional closing hours, but (Metro News) is nice. It's small and quaint and familiar."

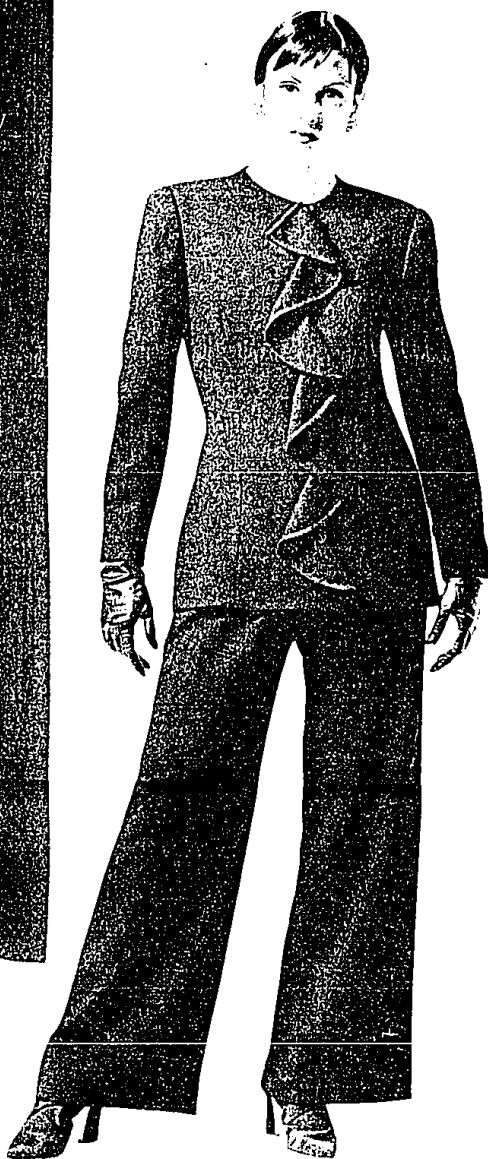
If Weiss needs any advice on how to keep up with her new competitor, she can find it at Halfway Down the Stairs children's bookshop in Rochester. Owner Cammie Mannino said that, while Barnes and Noble initially put a dent in her business, she learned how to carve out a niche for herself.

"You have to give people a different selection and better customer service," Mannino said. "Everybody who works at our store is a former teacher or a former librarian . . . I can give people a level of service you can't get at a chain store where they hire a lot of people and have a high turnover."

Still, Mannino noted that it was easier for her to compete with Barnes and Noble because hers is a specialty store, and is therefore not in direct competition with the superstore. For Metro News to remain in business, she said, they will have to offer an especially high level of quality.

"I think a general bookstore could compete if they had really knowledgeable book people and high quality service," Mannino said.

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