

Internet the salvation for small bookstores

By Amy Haimerl, New York Times

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. – When Peter Makin opened Brilliant Books five years ago, he quickly realized his business wouldn't survive in this remote locale if his only customers were local buyers.

In the summer, this small town five hours north of Detroit is a haven for tourists and summer residents who are drawn to the state's wine country. But after the fall colors fade and the sapphire waters of Lake Michigan chill, the region's population slumps by as much as 40 percent for much of the other nine months of the year.

But even as the summer visitors disappear, Brilliant Books is still thriving as a result of robust online sales.

A decade ago, independent bookstores were viewed as an industry on the decline. Crushed on price by Amazon and by the wide selection of national retailers like Barnes & Noble, thousands of mom-and-pop outlets had closed up shop.

But after years of losses, they are emerging from the decimation, with the number of independent bookstores rising 21 percent from 2010 to 2015.

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