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Susan Richmond, the owner of Inklings Bookshop, has a sense of humor and she's not afraid to show it in the displays at her Yakima, Washington, store.

A drone hangs from the ceiling over the store's registers, a clear poke at Amazon's efforts to deliver items via the robotic device.

And rather than a literal display for the movie release of “50 Shades of Gray,” a

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might surprise those who forecast the decline of physical retail stores amid the growth of e-commerce.

Certainly, there are plenty of examples of traditional physical retailers suffering. RadioShack recently filed for bankruptcy after years of declining sales. But it doesn't mean customers will stop shopping at traditional brick-and-mortar stores for good, said Mary Ann Odegaard, director of the retail management program at the University of Washington-Bothell.

“The idea was that you were a store customer or an Internet customer,” she said. “If you were one, you weren't the other.” That is far from true, she said.

If a customer wants a specific book for a class or book club, they might get it online for speed and convenience, she said. But that same customer may want to visit a bookstore like Inklings if they are looking for recommendations or enjoy browsing.

Online retailers, too, see the value of physical stores as a way to reach target customers or to promote certain products. Last month, Amazon opened a bookstore on the campus of Purdue University in Indiana, a move designed to help the online retailer get a stronger foothold in the college textbook market. There are also reports that Amazon wants to open other physical stores by taking over RadioShack outlets.

“You have to offer something the customer is looking for, she said. “Sometimes it's in a brick-and-mortar store and sometimes it's online.”

The Beer Shoppe in Yakima opened nearly nine years ago as a retail outlet that specialized in beers, such as hard-to-find regional microbrews and imports. When the shop moved to a new space at Third and Yakima avenues in 2012, beer lovers found a home. The shop started offering beer on tap and provided space for customers to enjoy their drinks and to mingle.

Recently, the shop started selling food and cask-conditioned ales, which is beer made

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said.

“You have the people who are there to come in and relax after work,” he said. “If they do have something good, they’ll grab a few bottles to go.”

Ultimately, retailers, regardless of what they sell and how they sell it, will be most successful when they establish a relationship with their customers, said Odegaard of UW.

Retailers want to be on that top three-or-four store list when customers decide they want to buy a certain product. That list can often include a mix of online and traditional retailers.

For retailers, “If you get that relationship going so you’re in that ‘consideration set’ for that person, that’s where you want to be.”

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