

# PayPal Changes Course After Censorship Controversy

March 13, 2012

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Washington -- After consulting with interested parties including the Center for Democracy & Technology, PayPal today [announced](#) [1] it would no longer demand that online ebook sellers stop offering certain categories of erotic fiction.

PayPal is narrowing its policy such that it will only bar the use of PayPal for the sale of specifically identified books that contain visual depictions of sexual activity the company believes are legally obscene or constitute child pornography. PayPal will also provide a process for book publishers or authors to appeal the determination that a book violates its policy.

"With this policy change, PayPal is correcting a serious mistake and setting a good example for the future," said Kevin Bankston, Director of Free Expression at the Center for Democracy & Technology. "PayPal's previous threats to cut off services to ebook platforms unless they stopped selling broad categories of erotic fiction was a major misstep. Such a clumsy and overbroad attempt to deputize online speech platforms as content police was all the more surprising coming from a company owned by eBay.com, an online auction platform that should understand the practical difficulties and threats to free expression that result when Internet intermediaries are held responsible for their users' speech."

Bankston continued, "By limiting its policy to pictures rather than text and to specific books rather than whole categories of content, and by promising a process through which ebook platforms and publishers can appeal PayPal's decisions, PayPal appears to be admitting that its previous demands to ebook publishers were far too broad and threatened to chill the availability of a wide variety of protected speech."

"We're thankful to PayPal for taking the objections of authors, booksellers and free speech advocates seriously and wisely choosing to change course," concluded Bankston. "We look forward to working with PayPal to ensure this new approach is effectively implemented in a way that protects everyone's rights to publish and purchase First Amendment-protected material online."

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## Links:

[1] <https://www.thepaypalblog.com/2012/03/update-paypal's-acceptable-use-policy/>