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## on our cover

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### ATOP OUR SMART COLUMNS

Universal Yarn's Forest Path is a soft cotton blend tied with gauzy leaves and wooden beads at intervals, to add a little something extra to knits.

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When *Yarn Market News* started in the late 1970s, it was a paper newsletter put together by a few industrious people in Asheville, North Carolina. The industry was smaller then, but the publication was immediately valuable, and over time it grew—as did the industry. But in 1988, Art Joinnides, then the magazine's publisher (and now our company president), printed the last issue with an impassioned plea written on the cover. He asked that those who wished to continue receiving *YMN* begin paying a small subscription fee—the company could no longer afford to send it out for free. Response wasn't strong enough and, sadly, the magazine was no more.

Then in the mid-2000s, when the industry was booming, Art and Trisha Malcolm made the decision to relaunch the only trade publication focused on yarn. *Yarn Market News* as you know it today debuted in the spring of 2005 as a high-quality full-fledged magazine. It was the perfect time to start up again, as knitting was experiencing a resurgence nationwide (it was the "new yoga," remember?). *YMN* was poised to impart solid business information to a growing industry on a consistent basis.

In 2008 we expanded the brand by hosting the first annual Smart Business Conference to share in-person, hands-on business advice with yarn shop owners and yarn-industry executives. We believe that more and more LYSOs were recognizing the need for business acumen as much as knitting know-how, and these successful shop owners were eager for expert information, especially on emerging technologies and social media. For three days each year we immerse attendees in a unique business experience tailored to their needs. These attendees consistently tell us that the conference is the best thing they do for their businesses, and the feedback I get from readers is that *Yarn Market News* is the only magazine they read cover to cover. It's incredibly rewarding and gratifying to know that our hard work is valued and appreciated.

Our goal from the beginning has been to make the magazine as accessible as possible by offering it free of charge, which we've been able to do thanks to the support of the advertisers who have been with us since the relaunch. That is still our goal. However, to cover rising editorial and production costs while maintaining our consistently high standards, it is necessary for us to make a change. Beginning in January, the frequency of issues will be reduced—from five times a year to three. The issues will serve our readers at the most important times of the business year, to coincide with the January and May TNNA trade shows and with the busy fall selling season (September).

Business decisions such as this are not made easily, and they are sometimes disappointing. We ask that you communicate to your suppliers how important *Yarn Market News* is to your business, and we encourage you to remind them that the magazine relies on their continued support. This is a unique and special industry, and we are proud of our role in it. We remain fully committed to *YMN* and to the retailers, manufacturers, designers and others who depend on it for information and advice.

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



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10



34



36



40



38

### in every issue

- 2 EDITOR'S LETTER
- 10 MARKET REPORT
- 16 BOOK REVIEWS
- 20 YARN FORWARD
- 22 TNNA UPDATE
- 24 CYC UPDATE
- 26 SMART STAFFING
- 28 SMART ONLINE
- 30 SMART MARKETING
- 32 SMART SANITY
- 34 INTERNATIONAL REPORT  
Vietnam
- 36 RETAIL PROFILE  
Sticks & Strings,  
Lansing, Michigan
- 44 CELEBRITY INTERVIEW  
Myrna Klein of  
Trendsetter Yarns



20

### features

- 38 LET'S PUT ON A SHOW!  
The next-generation craft scene offers opportunities for retailers and wholesalers alike. By Leslie Petrovski
- 40 SAMPLES SELL  
Our go-to guide to showing off your store models to best effect. By Daryl Brower





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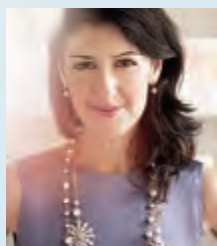
Dr. Lois P. Frankel, president of Corporate Coaching International, is a best-selling author, an executive coach and an internationally recognized expert in the field of leadership development for women. She has appeared on *Larry King Live*, *The Tavis Smiley Show*, *The Today Show* and *20/20* to discuss her *New York Times* best-selling books *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office*, *Nice Girls Don't Get Rich* and *Nice Girls Just Don't Get It*.



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The next issue of YMN will mail on December 6.



# The Book That Keeps on Giving

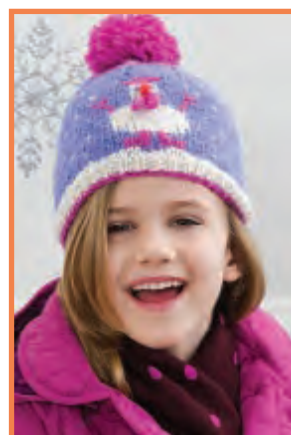
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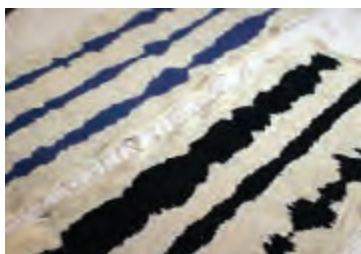
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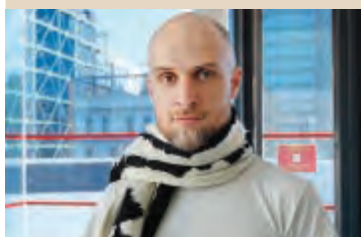
  
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## On Their Wavelength

One of the enduring appeals of knitting is the ability to create something unique—an item that no one else can exactly duplicate. **Knitic**, a collaboration of artists seeking to blend art and technology, has developed the ultimate one-of-a-kind accessory: the brain-wave scarf. Barcelona artists **Varvara Guljajeva** and **Mar Canet**



hook up subjects to a non-invasive EEG machine, the same kind of machine that medical professionals use to measure the electrical activity of the brain. The subjects' brain waves are recorded as they listen to a portion of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, then converted into a two-color knitting pattern for the artists' open hardware knitting machines. As they explain, "Every stitch of a pattern corresponds to a unique brain state stimulated by the act of listening.... The user's response to music is captured every second and memorized in the knitted garment pattern." Guljajeva and Canet dubbed the scarf-knitting project "Neuroknitting." To see a scarf, go to [www.knitic.com/2013/06/05/neuroknitting-let-me-knit-with-your-brain](http://www.knitic.com/2013/06/05/neuroknitting-let-me-knit-with-your-brain).

## Charting a New Course

Many a new knitter has experienced a light-bulb moment when discovering how to use charts. But even knitters who've used charts for years will have their minds blown by **Stitch Maps**, a new approach by author and teacher **JC Briar**. Briar literally wrote the book on traditional knitting charts (*Charts Made Simple*, Glass Iris Publications), but she still frequently found herself grabbing paper and pencil to mull over designs. "I've been hand-drawing knitting charts for years," she says, "whether to flesh out an idea, remember a bit of inspiration or explain something to my students. But drawing knitting charts by hand, although useful, is tedious and error-prone. I began to wonder if it was possible to automate the process."

Briar was particularly interested in non-linear charts. "Grid-based charts are great, but they have limitations. They don't show curves, and they assume that all stitches stand on top of each other in vertical columns. But for stitch patterns with increases and decreases, that's not the case."

She spent the better part of two years figuring out how to write software that would create precise, clear stitch maps. The result is revolutionary. A Stitch Map has no grid lines and doesn't force stitches into perfect rows and columns. Instead, stitches are depicted exactly as they sit in the knitted fabric, curving, moving, joining to-



gether (as where two stitches are knitted together) or jutting out (as when an increase is worked). **Stitch Maps** has practical utility—knitters can work right from the Stitch Map instead of using a grid-based chart—but it's the capacity to inspire knitters that excites

Briar: "**Stitch Maps** allows the knitter to see all the constituent parts of a stitch pattern, how they fit together and how they can be remixed. Knitters can tweak existing stitch patterns, plug pieces of different patterns into each other, and insert stitches to create something new."

Briar opted for a subscription website instead of selling software packages. Knitters can register for a free account, which entitles them to contribute stitch patterns to the collection. A Basic Subscription costs \$15 per year and allows the user to track knitting progress on a Stitch Map (highlighting the row to make it easier to follow) and to mark stitch patterns as "private" (making them invisible to other users). A Premium Subscription costs \$60 a year; it allows the user to export Stitch Maps and to make private stitch patterns accessible by invitation through user-generated links. Go to [www.stitch-maps.com](http://www.stitch-maps.com) for details on membership options and to see examples.

## AWARDS AND HONORS

Congratulations to **David Blumenthal**, President and CEO of **Lion Brand Yarn Company**, and **Dean Blumenthal**, EVP/COO, who were awarded the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2013 Award for the New Jersey region. The award recognizes outstanding entrepreneurs who create and build businesses, help transform industry, create jobs and contribute to their communities.

"Being recognized by a prestigious organization like Ernst & Young is such an honor for our fifth-generation family business," said David Blumenthal. "I'm grateful for the leadership of our fathers, who mentored us and taught us by example, and for the expertise and devotion of all our associates." The Blumenthals will go on to compete against other regional winners for the national title and will be feted, along with other winners, at a gala dinner in November in Palm Springs. Lion Brand Yarn Company was founded 135 years ago in New York and has been family-owned and operated ever since.

**Jim Bryson**, owner of **Bryson Distributing**, was

honored with TNNA's 2013 Tribute to Excellence in Needlework Award at the June trade show. The TEN Award is given each year to an individual who represents the finest the needlearts industry has to offer and who personifies TNNA's mission statement.



David and Dean Blumenthal

Bryson came to the needlearts industry in a roundabout way: He worked on the assembly lines at various Detroit car companies and in construction before a slump in the building market led him to work in his wife's yarn shop, where he learned to knit. Bryson later served as a sales rep for various yarn companies. By

the time the construction industry bounced back, he was already hooked. He helped design products and choose colors for Brown Sheep Company, but after market changes in the late '80s forced many yarn companies and distributors out of business, Bryson decided to go into distribution himself.

"By delivering the products, the quality and the service your customers expect," he says, "you can survive the tumults and thrive in the good times, and you can always have fun."



## A Wild & Woolly Farewell

Thirty-four years is a long time to be in business, certainly the retail business and especially the yarn business. Last spring, **Jackie Katzenstein** closed **Wild & Woolly Studio**, her Lexington, Massachusetts, yarn shop. "My store was right across the street from the tourist center," Katzenstein notes, "and we always got a lot of out-of-town visitors, parents of university students and tourists. I met loads of wonderful people that way." Katzenstein had been mulling over retirement in the abstract—"I thought maybe in a few years"—but a hefty rent increase forced her hand.

How did such a long and esteemed career in the yarn business begin? Katzenstein says she never intended to go into retail, mainly because her family was involved in the retail trade. "I heard business talk at the dinner table every night," she recalls. "I knew it was a hard way to make a living." But after she became an empty-nester, Katzenstein consulted a career counselor: "She told me to do something with crafts, and to start out of my house." Katzenstein did just that, selling hand-knit hats and scarves to wholesalers. That she would open her own shop was a matter of serendipity: Friends who owned a bookstore on Merriam Street had basement space available, and Katzenstein decided to set up shop there. "I didn't know anything about bookkeeping or payroll taxes, but I wasn't afraid of them because I'd heard all about them in my youth." After a few moves, Katzenstein ended up back on Merriam Street, this time occupying two floors instead of just the basement.

Katzenstein credits her shop's longevity with one thing: customer service. "Yarn shop owners have to realize that the [most important aspect] of our business is service," she says. "People can buy yarn anywhere, but they need a place where they can go to ask for help. Some stores give off a clubby [vibe], and I always tried to avoid that—I never wanted people to feel out of place." Katzenstein helped foster a sense of community with her popular newsletter; it began as a biannual mailing called the "Wool Street Journal," morphing into a weekly e-newsletter when printing and postage costs became prohibitive. And she loved offering classes. She always made sure people learned how to do things right and enjoyed watching students learn from each other.

Katzenstein has seen a lot of things come and go in her 34 years in the yarn business. "People have less leisure time these days because most work outside the home, and when they come home they have a house to care for, children, dinner to make—it doesn't leave much time for hobbies." She'll always cherish the connections she's made. "I've gotten unbelievable letters and e-mails from customers who heard I was closing the shop. One woman wrote, 'I love coming here because even though I'm just learning, nobody's ever made me feel stupid.' Another customer sent a one-sentence e-mail: 'My life is over.' I sent her a reply begging her to reconsider," Katzenstein quips.

Fans of the shop should not despair; Katzenstein is maintaining the Wild & Woolly name and website, stating on her site: "We are working on plans for the future.... The yarn world is a special one, and we are not ready to give up our place in it." Best wishes to Jackie Katzenstein in her new endeavors.



## A Yarn Bomb Gets Its Fifteen Minutes of Fame

Yarn bombing, once an unconventional alternative to graffiti, is now hitting the mainstream. In August, a grass-roots coalition in Pittsburgh called **Knit the Bridge** brought color and design to the Andy Warhol Bridge when it covered the structure in stitches. Pittsburgh-area crafters created colorful panels, knitted and crocheted from bright acrylic yarns; the

panels were collected at central drop-off points, where still more volunteers joined and completed pieces as necessary. Installation weekend saw the bridge closed to traffic so more than 300 pre-screened volunteers, working in shifts, could safely install the panels and covers onto the bridge structure.

**Sherri Roberts**, vice president of **The Fiber Arts Guild of Pittsburgh**, proudly notes, "Everything went smoothly," crediting the extensive planning of the various groups involved. "All the pieces were marked and cataloged so

volunteers would know exactly where to put them. We planned fallbacks for every aspect. Along the way we've had more than 1,800 people do all sorts of things to get this to fruition, including professionals contributing pro bono work regarding the structure of the installation, legality and safety." Organizers even thought carefully about the visual impact of the panels, deliberately using solid black covers on railings to frame the more colorful panels.

Unlike other forms of street art, yarn bombing won't damage or permanently alter underlying structures. Still, organizers took no chances with safety, selecting acrylic yarn for sturdiness, conducting their own tests to make sure the yarn wasn't flam-



mable and using industrial-strength cables to keep panels secure regardless of weather. Keenly aware of the size and scope of their project, volunteers plan to wash the panels after the installation is removed so that the individual pieces can be distributed as blankets to nonprofits like animal shelters, senior centers and homeless shelters. Perhaps best of all, the project helped galvanize the Pittsburgh community. Amy Rustic, a community leader from nearby Westmoreland County, saw a renewed interest in her local guild: "The group had been on hiatus, and the project helped revitalize our purpose."

But the benefits go beyond just interest in the fiber arts, sparking discussions about issues like public art and community. The Fiber Arts Guild of Pittsburgh is eager to build on this momentum. "As a guild, we want to keep the positive feeling going and augment what we already do in terms of community outreach," says Roberts. "Knit the Bridge is very descriptive of Pittsburgh: It highlights that we are a place of innovation, a place of bridges, a place of developing art, and a place full of diverse communities." View more photographs of the project at [www.knitthebridge.wordpress.com](http://www.knitthebridge.wordpress.com).



## Hindsight Is 20/20

Many's the time a new shop owner has sighed, "If only I had known!" **Kath Kilburn**, owner of

**Three Bags Full** in Halifax, West Yorkshire, has compiled all of her "if only I had known" moments and turned them into an e-book for budding entrepreneurs. *So You'd Like to Open a Wool Shop* thoroughly covers the process of opening a retail establishment, from planning

stages (she urges potentials to write a business plan, consider location very carefully and think

about shop policies before selling the first skein) to daily challenges like setting prices, dealing with



slow periods and communicating with suppliers. Kilburn's prior writing experience shows: The book is organized, clear and complete and has a comfortable, chatty tone. And the many "learn from my mistakes" tips make it clear that Kilburn

knows whereof she speaks.

Download the book at Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk.

## Thrilla in Spinzilla

Free up some bobbins, dab a little oil on that spinning wheel and dig out your spindles. TNNA's **Spinning and Weaving Group** is sponsoring a community-wide competition called **Spinzilla** during **National Spinning and Weaving Week** (October 7–13). Numerous companies, including Louet North America, Schacht Spindle Company, The Woolery and *Spin-Off Magazine*, sponsored teams, with a portion of the entrance fees going to the TNNA NeedleArts Mentoring Program. Teams will tackle various spinning challenges throughout the week, with first prize going to the team that spins the most yarn during the

week. Winners will receive a trophy, prizes and ever-important bragging rights. **Rita Petteys**, chairman of Spinzilla and owner of the Michigan fiber shop **Yarn Hollow**, hopes the event will "bring people together to spin as much as possible, inspire spinners to challenge themselves to try new skills, raise money for NAMP [and] expand enthusiasm for the fiber arts." Find out more about Spinzilla, including results, at [spinzilla.org](http://spinzilla.org).



## POUND FOR POUND

Nearly every knitter has been there: UFOs stack up, projects use less yarn than anticipated, knitting preferences change, and before you know it, you've accumulated a stash. **Mary Stowe**, owner of **Yarns Etc.** in Chapel Hill and **Great Yarns** in nearby Raleigh, North Carolina, came up with an innovative way to help her customers put those extra skeins to good use—and help a charity close to her heart. In June, Stowe's customers were encouraged to bring in stash yarn that they no longer wanted; for each pound of yarn brought in, the customer was given a dollar's worth of credit to spend at either shop.

Full skeins, partial skeins, half-knitted projects still on the needles—any yarn in any color and any fiber was welcome. Stowe seized on the chance to collect unwanted yarn so she could donate it to a knitting/crochet program at the North Carolina Correctional Institute for Women. She has long been involved with Our Children's Place, a nonprofit group that advocates on behalf of the children of incarcerated parents. Originally, the NCCIW's fiber arts program was designed to allow inmates to make hats for their own children, but it proved so popular that additional hats are now sold at craft fairs. All proceeds from the sale

of inmates' crafted goods go to Our Children's Place programs.

Stowe was overwhelmed by



her customers' response. "We collected more than 900 pounds of yarn," she says proudly. "In fact, we collected so much yarn, the prison couldn't take it all at once. We have to take it to them a little at a time, since they don't have much storage space."

Stowe offered a prize to the customer who donated the most yarn—a whopping 101 pounds. She didn't expect to give out \$900 in store credit but notes that most customers redeemed their vouchers during the summer, traditionally a slower time for yarn sales. She plans to hold another yarn swap, but probably not for at least another year: "We have to give people time to build up their stashes again."

## A New Trend in Retailing: Showrooming

It has a snappy name—showrooming—but the practice is anything but snappy for retailers. Showrooming occurs when consumers visit a bricks-and-mortar store to look at an item, perhaps trying it on or comparing colors, then use their mobile phones or other hand-held devices to purchase the same item at a cheaper price from a discounting online retailer. One recent survey showed that 40 percent of respondents admitted to showrooming at one time or another; other estimates put the percentage even higher.

Some retailers plagued by the practice are giving renewed attention to the so-called "try-on fee," which is exactly what it sounds like: A retailer charges a visitor a fee (amounts from \$5 to \$25 are frequently proposed) to try on items in-store. Should the customer buy the item, the try-on fee is credited toward the purchase price. Shoe stores are likely to be first in

line to impose such fees, since e-tailers' offers of free shipping and free returns make showrooming particularly popular among shoe shoppers. Even high-end designers are feeling the pinch: Vera Wang made headlines last spring when she implemented what she called an "appointment fee" at her bridal salon in Shanghai, charging prospective brides nearly \$500 for a personal consultation, tea and a session devoted to trying on bridal gowns.

Wang quickly discontinued the practice following a raft of unflattering press coverage, and it seems unlikely that LYS owners could successfully charge a similar fee for browsing among the skeins. But barring the try-on fee, what options do bricks-and-mortar shops have in the fight against showrooming? Share your ideas with us at [ymninfo@yarnmarketnews.com](mailto:ymninfo@yarnmarketnews.com).



## New Distribution Solutions

The rise of self-publishing and the ease of selling PDF patterns online has been a game changer in the knitwear-design industry. Yet the industry is still figuring out ways to integrate indie-designed patterns into more traditional retail outlets, particularly bricks-and-mortar yarn shops. Until now, the biggest source for an LYS looking to stock hard-copy patterns was Deep South Fibers, which handled most of the market, as we noted in our October 2012 issue. Designer **Anne Kuo Lukito** observes, "It's harder to stand out as an indie designer now. It seems that there are more talented designers coming into the industry at a faster rate than ever before."

Lukito recently shifted the focus of her business, **Crafty Diversions** ([www.craftydiversions.com](http://www.craftydiversions.com)), from publishing and distributing her own pattern line to becoming what she describes as a "small boutique distributorship." Crafty Diversions now distributes patterns by designers Ysolda Teague and Miriam Felton as well as Lukito's own line to LYSes across the country. "I was looking to grow my business and also to develop a closer relationship with shops and customers," she explains. "This way I can be a bit more dynamic and creative with constant changes in the market and in our business, and I can help fill the needs of yarn shops as well." One way Crafty Diversions is trying to meet the needs of LYSes is to provide them with advance copies of patterns they order so they can begin knitting shop samples even before their orders are delivered. Lukito wants to provide a "cooperative and collaborative approach in the way we [as indie designers] support shops, problem-solve and market our work."



**Stitch Sprouts** ([www.stitchsprouts.com](http://www.stitchsprouts.com)), founded in 2012 by designer **Heather Zoppetti**, also distributes indie patterns to LYSes but is looking to provide a broader cross-section of services to indie designers. "One of the biggest pressures of the business is having to wear so many hats—technical editing, photography, logo design, pattern formatting, distribution and so on. I enjoy the numerous facets of the work, but many designers are looking for help," Zoppetti says. She decided to offer designers one-stop shopping for all of those services. "Stitch Sprouts allows you to work with a single company that provides a wide array of services," she notes.



Both Lukito and Zoppetti believe in the power of the printed pattern. Notes Lukito, "I don't think that shops will completely get out of the pattern-selling business because patterns sell yarn." Zoppetti agrees: "LYS customers know that seeing products in person is a better experience than shopping online. They want to hold a pattern, look it over before buying, and walk out with a project. As long as the yarn shop exists, I believe printed patterns will endure."

## Knitting 24/7

You've seen walkathons, readathons, maybe even a danceathon or two, so why not a craft-athon? The owners of **Purlescence Yarns** in Sunnyvale, California, hosted a 24-hour hat-making event at their shop in July to benefit charity. They were inspired by Halos of Hope, a nonprofit that provides caps for individuals undergoing chemotherapy. Purlescence provided the venue, refreshments, prizes and contests (with, of course, plenty of yarn on hand) to keep participants motivated. More than 50 stitchers—20 or so of whom stayed all night—helped knit, crochet and sew hats for children and young adults attending Camp Happy Times, a free camp providing recreation and support to kids with cancer.

Special guests included Pam Haschke, founder of Halos of Hope and herself a cancer survivor, and **Shannon Dunbabin** of **Cascade Yarns**. Says Haschke, "Our charity was so honored to have been embraced by the Purlescence community, a giving family of knitters and crocheters. Their flying fingers created 215 hats to help ensure we could comfort the kids attending Camp Happy Times this year. I was so happy to have been there in person to experience it. Kudos to the Purlescence team for an extraordinary event." Kudos to hat-athon sponsors Cascade Yarns, Fiesta Yarns, the Knitmore Girls and Kollage Yarns as well. View a video of the event at [youtube.com/watch?v=dzKHLTBq3es](http://youtube.com/watch?v=dzKHLTBq3es).

## THE YARNY DEAD

Prepare for the coming zombie apocalypse—the yarn zombie apocalypse, that is. **John Lee** and **Jerry Welch**, veterans of the toy industry, have combined forces to create the **Yarn Zombies** brand, aimed at teens and young adults with an affinity for the "homespun, creepy [and] cool." Lee's adult son helped inspire the concept when he brought home a book of crocheted amigurumi and asked his mother if she could make a few for him. Lee got to thinking about the intersection of the DIY movement, modern crafters (yarn crafters in particular) and pop culture images from the horror genre. And quicker than a zombie can gobble brains, a new brand was born.

Yarn Zombies, Lee explains, aren't created by infected bites but rather by a bad relationship, a rotten day or a lost job. Lee is a big believer in the healing power of play and creativity, and he views Yarn Zombies as celebrating "the power of yarn-craft" to ward off stress, anxiety and heartbreak. Lee, Welch and company have created a whole zombie backstory on their website, complete with a cast of undead characters, a zombie-making iPhone app and a field guide written by two "zombie anthropologists."

The first Yarn Zombies products, called Jujus, went on sale in August. Jujus are small knitted dolls (shaped like zombies and other horrifying creatures, natch) designed as collectibles and friendship gifts. Each Juju has a name and a special power that is reputed to protect its owner against bad mojo (Roxy, the Sanity Juju, protects against stress, while Skip the gladiator brings good luck on the athletic field). Zombie Ballz—soft, squeezable stress relievers—will launch late this year, followed by knitting kits (including pattern, yarn, and knitting needles with skull toppers), which will appear in stores early next year. Lee hopes to expand further into the yarn industry and was excited by the enthusiastic welcome Yarn Zombies got when they debuted at San Diego's Comic Con last summer. Read all about Yarn Zombies and their message that "yarncraft is cool—and it's good for you!" at [www.yarnzombies.com](http://www.yarnzombies.com).



## SPEAK UP!

We're conducting another survey. Tell us how you stock books, magazines and other paper patterns in your store at [www.surveymonkey.com/s/YMNbooks](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YMNbooks)

## It Goes Hand in Hand

It's a changing time for publishing, but Boston artist/photographer **Carrie Strine** isn't deterred. Her modern crafting magazine, **Hand and Hand**, debuted in July in PDF form, with plans for print issues in the works. Strine was inspired to create her own magazine after realizing that most of the books and publications she was seeing just didn't, well, inspire her. She explains, "I don't want a book filled with patterns and how-tos—I'm not that kind of maker. I'm much more interested in history, theory and what inspires other makers." At the same time, Strine recognizes the value of instructional material for people of different skill levels. She's hoping that *Hand and Hand* will bridge the gap between inspiration and instruction.

The first issue is titled "The Knot" and uses the concept of tying together as its theme. Features include articles about knot-tying, making tie-dyed art, an interview with a macramé artist and tips for untangling knots in yarn skeins; tutorials cover embroidering Braille messages using French knots, making a hand-tied quilt and creating Sennett bracelets from cording—quite an eclectic mix. Strine has lofty goals for the magazine: "We want to highlight the connection of craft to art and design as much as possible, and we're looking outside the traditional crafting world for inspiration." [www.handandmag.com](http://www.handandmag.com)

## MY SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN



Outdoor sports + the Millennial Generation + the can-do crafting culture = **My Mountain**, a new program from **Schachenmayr** (distributed in North America

by Westminster Fibers). My Mountain takes aim at the 15- to 30-year-old demographic, a generation that values individuality and uniqueness, while embracing the DIY sensibility. Yarns like Boston (a brightly colored wool/acrylic blend), Lova (a quick-knitting yarn with vivid neon spots) and Lumio (which features a reflective effect in the dark) are right on trend, enticing young crafters to pick up needles and hooks. Schachenmayr marketing director Paul Drewes was inspired to create My Mountain when he noticed the number of young people wearing handcrafted headgear in his native Germany. "My 11-year-old son won't leave the house without his crocheted hat," he laughs. "We are hoping to bring this trend to North America and get more and younger people interested in our yarns." My Mountain kicked off its campaign with a hat design contest that received hundreds of requests for yarns and, as of this printing, more than 100 designs. The winning pattern (announced after *YMN* went to press) will be offered as a paid download, with all proceeds going to a charity of the winner's choice. [us.schachenmayr.com/mymountain](http://us.schachenmayr.com/mymountain)



## Yarn Shops in the News

Congratulations to **Cheryl Steplight**, owner of **The Knitting Loft** in Washington, D.C., who was chosen by the organization Count Me In for Women's Economic Independence as a finalist in the 2013 Urban Rebound Brooklyn Awards. One of just 28 winners, Steplight successfully pitched her business to a panel of judges and convinced them that her company has the ability to grow through the Business Accelerator Program, which provides intensive business coaching and education to the winners. Steplight was inspired to compete for the prize after hearing the founder of Count Me In, Nell Merlino, give the keynote address at last year's Yarn Market News Smart Business Conference in Baltimore.

Over on the West Coast, **La Knitterie Parisienne** owner **Edith Eig** was delighted when longtime customer Catherine Zeta-Jones recently declared on *Entertainment Tonight* that the Studio City, California, shop is her favorite knitting store. In addition to name-dropping the shop, Zeta-Jones discussed her lifelong passion for the craft, crediting knitting with keeping her busy and distracted while away from her family. Another of Eig's clients, Ali Vincent—former winner of *The Biggest Loser* and now host of her own talk show, *Live Big With Ali Vincent*—taped a segment in the store in which Eig taught Vincent and her mother how to knit. The episode aired this summer, adding to Eig's press clippings and spreading word about the store on the Live Well network.

We'd also like to give accolades to **This Is Knit**, recently picked as one of the top fifty shops—of all kinds—in Ireland. More than 3,400 members of the public submitted votes for their favorite establishments, from hair salons to butchers to cafés; the Dublin shop took finalist honors in the Specialist Shop category. Owner **Lisa Sisk** says, "We were truly delighted to discover that so many of our lovely customers cast a vote for us. It's a wonderful affirmation that we are doing the right things and making our shop a welcoming, friendly space for all knitters and crocheters, whether they are just starting out or have been crafting for years."

## Attention Campers!

**Brett Bara** is on a mission: to bring crafty goodness to all residents of New York City. Inspired by wistful comments from strangers such as "I really wish I knew how to do that," Bara decided that if she built it, they would come. This fall, she'll open the **Brooklyn Craft Company**, a bricks-and-mortar studio that will provide a venue for DIY and modern craft classes.

The author, television host and crafts expert tested the waters by staging Brooklyn Craft Camp, a one-day live event that combined a slew of craft classes with good food, music, cocktails and fun. "I wanted to put on craft classes in a festive, partylike atmosphere," Bara says. "People in New York have the desire to become crafty, but they need a little help getting into it." The event quickly sold out, and Bara was approached by companies wanting to collaborate on similar events.

She decided to follow up by establishing a permanent space for crafting education. "This is not a retail store," Bara emphasizes. "We already have great retail shops in New York. Brooklyn Craft Company is all about classes, events, education and community."

Its new home is a 1,500-square-foot loft in a former pencil factory (how's that for serendipity?) in Brooklyn's Greenpoint neighborhood; it will serve as both a permanent staging area for future Craft Camps (two are scheduled this fall and several more for 2014) and a classroom. Her syllabus is ambitious: BCC will provide instruction in traditional crafts like knitting, sewing and jewelry making, along with less-typical offerings like macramé, printmaking and upholstery and even DIY nail art, mixology and cookie/cake decorating. Bara hopes the studio will become a destination for visiting crafters looking to schedule book-launch parties and other events. Check out Brooklyn Craft Company's current schedule at [www.brooklyncraftcompany.com](http://www.brooklyncraftcompany.com).





## YMN CALENDAR

Events to keep you in stitches this fall.

**October 2–6**

### Knit & Crochet Show

Embassy Suites Charlotte-Concord  
Charlotte, North Carolina  
[www.knitandcrochetshow.com](http://www.knitandcrochetshow.com)

**October 5–6**

### Fall Fiber Festival Montpelier

Montpelier Station, Virginia  
[www.fallfiberfestival.org](http://www.fallfiberfestival.org)

**October 5–6**

### The Wool Festival at Taos

Kit Carson Park  
Taos, New Mexico  
[www.taoswoolfestival.org](http://www.taoswoolfestival.org)

**October 11–14; November 1–4;  
November 22–25**

### The Knitting and Stitching Show

- Alexandra Palace, London, UK
- Royal Dublin Society (RDS), Dublin, Ireland
- Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, UK

[www.twistedthread.com/pages/exhibitions/viewExhibition.aspx?id=39](http://www.twistedthread.com/pages/exhibitions/viewExhibition.aspx?id=39)

**October 19–20**

### Michigan International AlpacaFest

DeltaPlex Area  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
[www.alpacafest.org](http://www.alpacafest.org)

**October 19–20**

### New York State Sheep & Wool Festival

The Dutchess County Fairgrounds  
Rhinebeck, New York  
[www.sheepandwool.com](http://www.sheepandwool.com)

**October 24–27**

### Men's Southeast Knitting Retreat

Asbury Hills Camp & Retreat Center  
Cleveland, South Carolina  
[www.mensknittingretreat.com/scheduled-events.html](http://www.mensknittingretreat.com/scheduled-events.html)

**October 25–27**

### Creativ Festival

Metro Toronto Convention Center  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
[www.csnf.com](http://www.csnf.com)

**October 25–27**

### Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair

Western North Carolina Agriculture Center  
Fletcher, North Carolina  
[www.saffsite.org](http://www.saffsite.org)

**October 26–27**

### Fiber Expo

Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds  
Ann Arbor, Michigan  
[www.fiberexpo.com](http://www.fiberexpo.com)

**October 31–November 3**

### Interweave Knitting Lab

Marriott San Mateo  
San Mateo, California  
[www.interweaveknittinglab.com](http://www.interweaveknittinglab.com)

**November 1–3**

### Vogue Knitting LIVE!

Palmer House Hilton Hotel  
Chicago, Illinois  
[www.vogueknittinglive.com](http://www.vogueknittinglive.com)

**November 2–3**

### The Fiber Festival of New England

Eastern States Exposition Fairground  
West Springfield, Massachusetts  
[www.thebig.com/ese/esevents/Fiber\\_Festival.asp](http://www.thebig.com/ese/esevents/Fiber_Festival.asp)

**November 2–3**

### FiberMania

Josephine County Fairgrounds  
Grants Pass, Oregon  
[www.sojaa.com](http://www.sojaa.com)

**November 7–10**

### Stitches East

Connecticut Convention Center  
Hartford, Connecticut  
[www.knittinguniverse.com](http://www.knittinguniverse.com)

## Knitting Goes Literary

**Ann Hood** touched the knitting world with her 2008 novel *The Knitting Circle*, in which a bereaved mother finds solace and healing through knitting. Next month will see the release of a nonfiction collection of essays edited by Hood, *Knitting Yarns: Writers on Knitting* (W.W. Norton), in which an impressive group of 27 authors (including Barbara Kingsolver, Sue Grafton, Ann Patchett, Jane Smiley, Andre Dubus III and Hood herself) share stories about knitting: how it healed them, how it helped them, how it transformed them. *YMN* caught up with Hood to hear more about the experience of collecting the essays that make up the book.

**YMN:** What made you decide on a nonfiction book that focused on knitting?

**AH:** As an avid knitter, I began noticing how many writers were knitting at readings and other literary events. Conversations with them revealed why they knit, and I thought their stories should be shared.

**YMN:** Was it difficult to find prominent authors who were also knitters? Do you have a secret

group of “Amazing Authors Who Also Knit”?

**AH:** That would be a great group! I’ve knit with Anita Shreve and Samantha Chang. I e-mailed [other] friends and asked if they wanted to share a knitting essay and to pass on names of writers they knew who knit. Before long, I had this amazing lineup. I



already have a list of 10 additional writers in case there’s a *Knitting Yarns II*.

**YMN:** Was it difficult finding male authors who knit?

**AH:** It was serendipity. I was having a few beers with Andre Dubus, and we were discussing our latest projects. When I told him about the knitting anthology, he said, “I once knit a scarf for my blind aunt.” “Perfect!” I told him.



**YMN:** Were the contributors all personal friends, or did you meet some for the first time through the book?

**AH:** Some were friends; others, whom I had known only through their writing, are now good friends as well. I’m delighted to have shared this experience with all of them.

**YMN:** Were there any essays in *Knitting Yarns* that particularly moved or surprised you?

**AH:** I was so happy every time a new essay dropped into my e-mail. It’s impossible to choose particular ones, but I cried over Kaylie Jones’s and Anne D. LeClaire’s and I laughed hard with John Dufresne’s.

**YMN:** What kind of things do you knit? Any favorite yarns or fibers? Do you do other crafts, like crochet, spinning or weaving?

**AH:** I love to knit dishrags. And right now I’m knitting two shawls—the pattern is called Mara. It’s great to knit while I’m traveling because it starts with just five stitches and then grows from there, and it fits in a zip-lock bag. I’m obsessed with Manos yarn from Uruguay. And Peaches and Cream for my dishrags.

# Book Reviews

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

## The Art of Seamless Knitting

By Simona Merchant-Dest  
and Faina Goberstein  
Interweave Press; \$26.95  
ISBN: 9781596687882



Every knitter who has walked by unsewn pieces of a sweater and felt their mocking glare has at some point vowed to knit all future sweaters in the round. But seamless knitting presents certain design and construction challenges, too: Raglan and yoke styles may not be the most flattering sleeve treatments, for instance, and it can be difficult to skillfully blend increases and decreases into a stitch pattern. Designers Merchant-Dest and Goberstein fearlessly tackle these issues and more. They begin by laying out various methods of seamless construction—bottom up versus top down, and knitting in rounds versus knitting in rows. Practical advice like avoiding jogs in patterns, tweaking fit and tips for designing in the round are also included. Patterns—11 in all—are organized by the type of stitchwork involved. The authors' emphasis on technique spills over into the pattern sections: Each chapter begins with hints on working with that particular kind of stitch pattern in a seamless garment. The patterns themselves skillfully illustrate the authors' mastery of these techniques: Merchant-Dest's lace cardigan, knit top down, combines a larger lace motif on the body with a smaller insert atop the center of each sleeve. Goberstein's cabled cardigan illustrates how to decrease invisibly within a row of cables. Those who loathe sewing should note that, the book's title notwithstanding, the patterns within often do require some seaming.

## 50 Knitted Gifts for Year-Round Giving

Sixth&Spring Books; \$19.95  
ISBN: 9781936096565

Hand-knit gifts are perennially popu-

lar; this book presents a comprehensive collection in convenient calendar order. The focus is on accessories and home-dec items that don't require precise fit, a sensible approach to take when knitting for others. Start off the new year wearing Robyn Schragar's lovely Midnight Kiss capelet, make Cheryl Murray's sweet cowl with heart motifs for Valentine's Day, give Dad Mari Tobita's color-work scarf for Father's Day, and so on. Even holidays not typically



associated with knitting get their due: red, white and blue bunting celebrates Independence Day, while nautical-themed pillows look right at home by the seaside. Fall and winter holidays are where the collection really shines: Diane Zangl's diamond throw puts a fresh spin on school colors, and a felted bag shaped like a jack-o'-lantern makes trick-or-treating a cinch. Don't miss the holiday treats, including Barb Brown's festive Christmas stocking, Kyle Kunnecke's Hanukkah hat with subtle dreidel motifs, and Amy Gunderson's wreath, which cleverly wraps bands of Fair Isle around a foam ring. Universal Yarn's Deluxe Worsted in every shade of the rainbow has never looked better.

## The New Crochet

By Marion Madel  
PotterCraft; \$19.99  
ISBN: 9780385346139



Madel's book is a thorough, beautifully presented resource packed with projects that will advance the skills of existing crocheters and win many new converts. The author takes a step-by-step, stitch-by-stitch approach, beginning with the humble chain stitch, then moving on to slip stitch, half-double and so on. Each lesson, even the one on chain stitch, is paired with a stylish project; budding cro-

cheters will hone their skills and produce a quick but attractive accessory in one fell swoop. Lessons include plenty of clear photos of hands and hook; helpful hints abound in sidebars; charts, diagrams and schematics help ease a newbie's fears. Where *The New Crochet* truly stands out, though, is with its clean and airy style. Projects include cowls and wraps, along with mittens, bags, caps and several simple sweaters, but all rely on the beauty of the stitchwork rather than glitz or gimmick. The muted palette and natural-fiber yarns add elegance, aided by Maki Nakahara's minimalist styling and Hiroko Mori's deliberately understated photography.

## Big Foot Knits

By Andi Smith  
Cooperative Press; \$16.95  
ISBN: 9781937513252

This book is for all frustrated knitters who find that their handmade socks don't fit right, whether their tootsies are tiny or, well, not so tiny. Smith approaches socks the way savvy knitters approach sweaters, with an emphasis on measuring and custom fit. She suggests sock knitters take a comprehensive series of foot and leg measurements, then analyze the shape of their heels and toes (toes can be pointy, squared-off or



rounded; heels come in narrow, triangular and boxy shapes). Easy-to-use worksheets enable knitters to

translate their personal statistics into stitches. The comprehensive technical information is buttressed by 12 good-looking sock patterns in larger than typical size ranges (10.5-, 13- and 14.5-inch circumferences), and each has worksheets and tips for customization. Better still, the patterns include instructions for knitting either cuff-down or toe-up—a bonus, since many sock knitters profess rabid support for one method over the other.

## Vogue Knitting Very Easy Sweaters

By the editors of *Vogue Knitting*  
Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95  
ISBN: 9781936096664

*Vogue Knitting* is known for many things—runway-inspired fashion and virtuoso designing among them—but the magazine's "Very Easy" patterns, with basic stitches and simplified finishing, are a perennially popular feature. This collection proves that less-complex knitting doesn't have to be boring or frumpy and isn't limited to

## Bestseller Box



Here's what was hot on the bestseller lists for the first week of August.

### Amazon Needlecrafts and Textile Crafts List

4. *Knit to Flatter*, by Amy Herzog (STC Craft)
7. *Tudor Roses*, by Alice Starmore (Calla Editions/Dover)
9. *Vogue Knitting Very Easy Sweaters*, by the editors of *Vogue Knitting* (Sixth&Spring Books)
15. *The Knitter: Knitting Masterclass*, by Juliet Bernard (Collins & Brown)

### Barnes & Noble Knitting List

1. *Lacy Little Knits*, by Iris Schreier (Lark Crafts)
3. *One + One: Scarves, Shawls & Shrugs*, by Iris Schreier (Lark Crafts)
4. *Sock Yarn Studio*, by Carol Sulcoski (Lark Crafts)
7. *Nicky Epstein Knits for Dolls*, by Nicky Epstein (Sixth&Spring Books)



# BE A SUPERSTAR VENDOR

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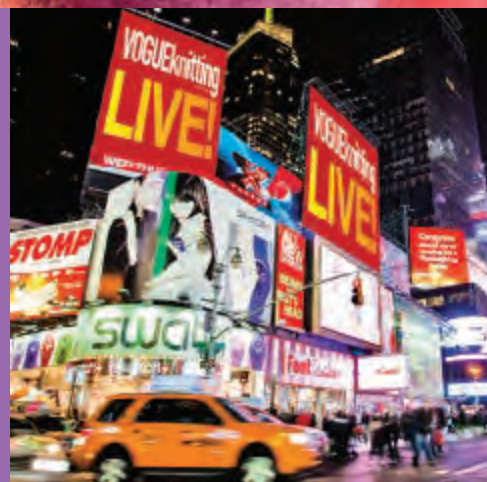
**NEW★YORK**

January 17–19, 2014  
New York  
Marriott Marquis



“We’ve done every show in the country, but I have never seen a show as **good** as this one. We actually **sold out** of yarns, and we always bring a lot.”

—Tess Bickford,  
Tess' Designer Yarns



“The Marketplace was exciting and fresh, providing a **personal and friendly** boutique shopping experience.”

—Pam Hoffman,  
Indian Lake Artisans

For a vendor application or additional information, please contact Carol Buonanno at [carol@sohopublishing.com](mailto:carol@sohopublishing.com)



“The customer base was very **knowledgeable** about my product and **excited** to see a wide variety of supplies and products represented at the show.”

—Cara Romano,  
Cara Romano Studio Jewelry

[www.vogueknittinglive.com](http://www.vogueknittinglive.com)



**BE A WEST COAST VENDOR! MARCH 14–16, 2014  
MEYDENBAUER CONVENTION CENTER, SEATTLE**



# Book Reviews

boxy garments. Just about every style of sweater is featured, from raglan to yoke, T-shirt to dolman,



capelets and, yes, even a few sweaters with set-in sleeves. And with 30 years of magazines

to choose from, the breadth and style of the collection is stunning. First up are sweaters in which stockinette stitch predominates, including Melissa LaBarre's versatile and timeless cherry-red garter-stitch yoke cardigan and Faith Hale's easy-fitting dolman, perfect for layering. The "Light & Easy" section features warm-weather tanks, short-sleeve options and layering pieces, including Kristin Omdahl's drapery bamboo top, Cathy Carron's sleeveless tunic with dropped-stitch pleats and John Brinegar's tailored vest with exposed seams. "Dramatic Shapes" runs the gamut from Renée Lorion's tapered pullover with bell sleeves to Mari Lynn Patrick's center-to-edge cardigan featuring mitered corners. Cabled patterns get their own section; standouts include Sarah Hatton's cropped cape-style cardigan with snap closures and Rosemary Drysdale's sand-stitch cardi with striking cabled collar. Last are stalwart stripes and colorwork: Kaffe Fassett contributes a striped turtleneck with a nipped-in waist, Ruth Garcia-Alcantud offers a yoked sweater with stranded Fair Isle motifs, and Twinkle goes big with stripes on the back (but not the front) of her bulky button-up.

## Crochet a Zoo

By Megan Kreiner

Martingale & Co.; \$22.99  
ISBN: 9781604682731

For her day job, Kreiner is an artist and animator for DreamWorks Animation SKG. So it stands to reason that she has an eye for creating playful little critters. Her debut book invites the reader to crochet a zooful, from penguin

## To Market, to Market

Marketing in the social media age can be daunting for small business owners. Let these professionals guide you with strategies specifically aimed at today's Internet-savvy customer.



**Marketing in the Participation Age**  
By Daina Middleton  
(Wiley; \$29.95; ISBN: 9781118402306)

Daina Middleton, an expert in digital marketing, believes that we're in a new era when it comes to marketing: the "participation age." Forget the notion of a passive consumer who needs guidance before making a decision; today's customer is an active participant, using the Internet to get and give information. Middleton urges marketers to give up the preexisting model for advertising (i.e., presenting a persuasive message through a passive medium like television). Instead, marketers need to figure out a way to get customers actively involved. The first step is making sure these customers can find your product and information about it and your business. The second step is to empower them by giving them something to do, such as creating an online account or leaving a product review. Next, customers must connect—both to your brand and to other customers. Middleton finishes by discussing better ways to measure the impact of this participation-based marketing strategy. The book sometimes gets bogged down in marketer-speak, but end-of-chapter summaries help reiterate the author's valuable message: Old strategies aren't the most effective ones in dealing with today's participatory consumer.

## Engagement Marketing

By Gail F. Goodman (Wiley; \$24.95;  
ISBN: 9781118101025)

Gail Goodman is president of Constant Contact, a business that provides marketing help—including their popular e-newsletter service—for small businesses. In this book, Goodman focuses on



how small business owners can use social media to increase sales. Her theory is simple: Most small businesses draw their customers through word of mouth. But in today's world, word of mouth isn't just face-to-face chats between friends; it

also includes social media interactions—"conversations" on message boards, in blog posts and as mentions on Facebook. Goodman advises a three-step approach: (1) Start by delivering a great customer experience; (2) entice the satisfied customer to remain in touch; then (3) keep the customer engaged in order to maximize the likelihood she'll buy from you again. Goodman's book is aimed squarely at the small business owner who may not be intimately familiar with the Internet in general and social media in particular, giving plenty of explanations, concrete examples and screen shots to buttress her message. Her chapters addressing common obstacles to using Internet marketing, as well as concrete tips and tricks, will help even the most Internet-averse small business owner.

## Marketing to Millennials

By Jeff Fromm and Christie Garton (Amacom Books; \$24.95; ISBN: 9780814433225)



Millennials—those born between 1977 or so and 1995—are a cohort impossible for marketers to ignore. There are more than 80 million Millennials today, a group with huge buying power and media presence. Ad agency exec

Jeff Fromm and Millennial entrepreneur Christie Garton examine this generation on the theory that a marketer can't successfully appeal to a group without understanding it thoroughly. The authors use survey results and interviews to show how the Millennial generation is not a monolithic group, but rather is made up of subgroups with different attitudes and motivations that affect their buying behavior. Some of their insights seem obvious (e.g., Millennials are early adopters of technology, so you'll need to reach out via the newest platforms and tools), while others are less so (the authors believe Millennials are open to "expert" advice from sources not traditionally considered expert, making customer feedback and online reviews particularly important to this demographic). A chapter with tips on getting started helps tie it all together. You'll gain a better understanding of a big and powerful market segment so you can figure out ways to put your products in their hands.



to rhinoceros, kangaroo to panda, giraffe and human zookeeper, too. Crocheters can start off with wobbly little penguins: Details like orange beaks, tufts at the top of the heads and realistic coloring for parents and babies amp up the cute factor. Kreiner manages to



create amazingly expressive faces on harp seals, lions and tigers and skillfully uses felt embellishment for a giraffe's spots and a zebra's stripes. Even the zookeepers are full of charming details: khaki uniforms, food for the animals (made out of felt) and tiny laces on their shoes. How-to illustrations help speed the process along; templates for felt items won't leave stitchers guessing.

### Vintage Design Workshop

By Geraldine Warner

Interweave Press; \$24.95

ISBN: 9781596688391

Readers should know from the get-go that this book is all about technique—and not a collection of vintage-inspired patterns. That's not a criticism, however; those interested in knitting from old patterns or simply tweaking modern patterns to incorporate vintage



style will find plenty of valuable instruction. Part of Warner's mission: to help today's knitters

decipher and adapt older patterns. To that end, she provides a thorough discussion of fit, with instructions on measuring, ease, making a muslin prototype and parsing out pattern pieces. She devotes a chapter to yarn substitution, then shows how to adjust vintage-sized patterns to modern-sized bodies. Recognizing that not every knitter will have the fortitude to work directly from a decades-

old pattern, the second half of the book discusses retrofitting current designs by adding vintage-inspired elements. Warner walks knitters through sleeves, collars, necklines, cuffs, pleats and pockets, showing how to graft these vintage design details onto contemporary garments. With this how-to manual in hand, knitters will be ready to stitch stylish, well-fitting garments from the pages of those vintage knitting magazines they've been collecting or put a vintage spin on contemporary patterns.

### The Knitter's Curiosity Cabinet, Volume 2

By Hunter Hammersen

Pantsville Press; \$26.95

ISBN: 9780984998227

Renaissance "curiosity cabinets" were collections of small items—fossils, shells, botanica and the like—designed to incite wonder in



their viewers. Hammersen returns with a second self-published collection inspired by these cabinets. Instead of collecting items from nature, though, the author collects lace, cable and ribbing patterns, but the sense of wonder she inspires is the same. Taking vintage prints of butterflies as her jumping-off point, Hammersen has created 18 patterns for accessories. Half of them are socks; the others range from hats, wrist warmers and cowls to shawls. Patterns are presented in pairs, and each is accompanied by a reproduction of a print featuring the colorful species of butterfly that inspired the designs. Fans of hand-painted yarns will enjoy seeing how semisolid hand dyes, some from well-known dyers, others from very small boutique artisans, are skillfully employed in these elegant accessories.

### Among Stones

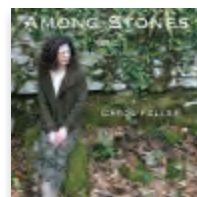
By Carol Feller

Stolen Stitches; \$22

ISBN: 9780957121225

Popular designer Carol Feller

presents her indie collection, consisting of nine patterns that, in her words, are "simple, interesting, [and] wearable." The soft-cover booklet includes eye-catching patterns for both sweaters and accessories. The Dacite cardigan requires minimal finishing and can be worn with a draped front or buttoned; the Liathite hoodie features raglan lines and a spiffy cable inset (it comes in child sizes too); while the Gabbro pullover uses lace and short-row detailing to create a flattering and comfort-



able silhouette. The Pyrite socks are designed for handpainted and other multicolored yarns, with a slip-stitch pattern to keep color segments on the move. A versatile and wearable collection, *Among Stones* is sure to please fans of Feller's tailored, textured aesthetic.

### Backyard Sheep

By Sue Weaver

Storey; \$16.95

ISBN: 9781603429672

It's every knitter's fantasy: to bring home a flock of sheep (or at least one or two), pop them in the backyard and knit their wool. It may be a pipe dream for most of us, but fiber enthusiasts seriously considering raising sheep on a relatively small piece of land will surely want to pick up a copy of this book. It's



a reference manual of sorts, chock-full of ovian advice, from how to select the best breed for your acreage to

feeding and first aid for your flock to training your sheep (Weaver is a proponent of training the animals to respond to a clicker). Want your flock to multiply? A section is devoted to breeding, including tips for ushering lambs into the world and caring for the little tykes once they arrive. It's a mistake, though,

to think that this fact-filled volume is only for those who want to raise their own sheep. Knitters, crocheters, spinners—anyone who loves wool or sheep, or perhaps even mutton, will enjoy reading about the development of the domestic sheep, the history of wool in America and characteristics of different breeds.

### Debbie Bliss Yarn Collection Creative Cables

Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 9781936096589

Debbie Bliss's Rialto yarn, with its smooth texture, bouncy feel and excellent stitch definition, is perfect for knitting cables and other textured designs. It's not surprising then that Bliss has gathered 25 cabled designs knit in various weights of Rialto in this lovely book. The first design is a show-stopper: Jacqueline van Dillen's wavy sweater with stockinette peplum features an intricate allover motif



on bodice, back and sleeves, with ribbing cleverly inserted at the sides for a fitted silhouette—but perhaps the most striking detail is the long back zipper. While most of the garments are women's sweaters, men and children aren't completely out of luck. Melissa Leapman contributes a lovely cable-and-ladder pullover for the guys; Galina Carroll presents a charming girl's dress with cables of varying heights at the waist, set off by embroidered flowers; Debbie Bliss's own child's sweater mixes entrelac and cables in an easy-fitting pullover. When you're in the mood for a smaller project, cast on Manuela Burkhardt's comfy socks or Karen Bourquin's fingerless gloves with bobbles, eyelets and beads. This is not a how-to book; rather, it's aimed at those who have already mastered the basics of knitting cables and are looking for creativity and style. They will certainly find it among these striking designs.





# FLEECE to Yarn

The many ways to transform fibers on the market into handspun yarn.

By Liz Gipson

**M**erino, perhaps the most recognizable breed to yarn buyers, is renowned for its fineness, tight well-defined crimp, pearlescent sheen and next-to-skin softness. **Ashland Bay Multicolored Merino (#4)** (100% merino; combed top; 13 multicolors) blends harmonious colors that can create yarns from fine to fancy, as shown in this worsted spun yarn.

**Frabjous Fibers Three Feet of Sheep Six Sheep Sampler (#12)** (merino, Bluefaced Leicester, Corriedale, Fin, Falkland and Polworth; combed top) is packaged in a 3-foot-long bag with a hang tag and each breed in a different color (8oz total). The breeds are compatible, so spinners can experiment with color combinations, as shown here in these semiworsted spun yarns.

Medium wools are an excellent choice for beginners. **Ashford Corriedale Sliver (#10)** (100% Corriedale; combed top; 51 colors) is beautifully prepared and very easy to work with. These semiworsted spun yarns bloom beautifully when finished.

**Louet** offers more than 25 breed-specific fibers, from well-loved Shetland to the unique three-colored Jacob. **Perendale (#9)** (100% Perendale; carded

sliver, white only) is a bouncy longwool that makes a nice sweater yarn, as demonstrated in this semiwoolen, low-twist spun yarn.

**Abstract Fiber's Organic Polworth/Silk (#7)** (75% organic Polworth/25% cultivated Bombyx silk; combed top; 10 semisolids, 30 multicolors) is hand-dyed in bold colors with medium-sized repeats. Spin to either preserve or blend the color repeats, as demonstrated in these semiworsted 2-ply, chain-ply and textured cable yarns.

**Anzula's Baby Camel & Merino Blend (#6)** (50% baby camel/50% merino; 89 semisolids, 6 multicolors), hand-dyed in Anzula's signature soft romantic colorways, is a true luxury yarn. Playful beehive and semiworsted 2-ply spun yarns show a more subtle approach to spinning color.

**SweetGeorgia Yarns Superwash BFL (#2)** (100% Superwash Bluefaced Leicester; combed top; 39 semisolids, 25 multicolors) is perfect for socks and so much more. This company is known for its stunning depth of color and long color repeats; using different spinning techniques with semi-solid colorways also shows off subtle color differences, as shown here in a chain-ply, bouclé and semiworsted 2-ply.





The variety of fibers and preparations for spinners available in today's market is stunning compared with even a decade ago. Explored here are breed-specific, hand-dyed and luxury blends that are transformed into myriad yarn styles that can be matched to bring out each fiber's unique qualities. Sarah Anderson, author of *The Spinner's Book of Yarn Designs: Techniques for Creating 80 Yarns* (Storey), tackled the challenge of transforming each fiber into the spectacular yarn you see here.

**Yarn Hollow Wensleydale (#3)** (100% Wensleydale; combed top; 52 semisolids, 38 multicolors) is a longwool that offers brilliant stitch definition. Though it's often used for outerwear, don't count this lustrous fiber out for next-to-skin wear, including long-wearing socks. This subtle yet saturated hand-dyed colorway is spun in semiworsted, bulky singles with low twist to bring out the loft in this long yet relatively fine fiber.

**New World Textiles Dye-Lishus (#11)** (100% cotton; drawn sliver; white and pretreated) puts a new spin on hand dyes. The cotton fiber comes pretreated, to readily receive direct, fiber-reactive and acid dyes (this appears pink), and untreated (white). When dyed, the untreated cotton will remain white; the treated portion will take the dye. Despite its reputation, cotton is not hard to spin. It just needs a lot of twist, which can be accomplished by double drafting, as shown in this 2-ply and 4-ply cabled yarn ready for the dye pot.

**Natural Fiber Producers (#1)** bypasses the carded/combed language to label their yarns as "lofty" or "designer," which describes the kind of yarn created by each fiber preparation. Carded fiber (lofty) creates an airy, fuzzy woolen yarn. Combed fiber (designer) creates dense, smooth worsted yarns with good stitch

definition. This Lofty Superfine Alpaca (100% alpaca; carded sliver; 2 natural colors) is spun semiwoolen with low twist to maintain the fiber's softness.

Two long, luxurious fibers—Muga silk and ultrafine mohair—are combined to create a fiber that shimmers like gold in **Lucky Cat Crafts's Muga/Mohair Blend (#5)** (50% Muga silk/50% mohair; carded sliver; natural color). Muga, once reserved for royalty, is given loft by the fine mohair, as demonstrated in this semiwoolen yarn and companion bouclé.

**Zealana's Tui (#8)** (70% merino/15% cashmere/15% possum; cloud; natural color) is the same fiber cocktail as its Tui yarn. Adding downy fibers to wools gives them a buttery feel and a slight halo. Cloud is a minimally processed fiber that allows for a variety of spinning options. These fibers were carded into punis and spun semiwoolen to create a luxurious yarn with a moderate halo.

**Bijou Basion's Yak (#13)** (100% yak; cloud; 2 colors) is a domestic product attractively packaged in 1-ounce take-home containers in two natural shades. (Yak is a coveted down fiber in league with angora, cashmere and bison.) Given the same treatment in our spinner's hands as the Tui, the resulting yarn's soft look matches its dreamy feel.





# The National NeedleArts Association

BY PATTY PARRISH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Hooray for Needlearts!

The June TNNA trade show in Columbus, which had a "Hollywood" theme this year, was filled with the sounds of celebration. All of the needlearts were represented at our Friday Walk of Fame, starting with our growing, popular shopping experience Sample It, where exhibitors can sell new product samples before the show. That night we also hosted the Needlepoint Designer Showcase, Meet the Teacher, a demonstration by the Spinning and Weaving Group promoting their community event Spinzilla, and the Red Carpet Runway fashion show sponsored by the Yarn Group.

On Saturday, the showroom floor buzzed with activity. That night, our awards presentation honored one special TNNA member and gave awards to those members on the cutting edge of innovation. We presented our annual Tribute to Excellence in NeedleArts Award to Jim Bryson, owner of Bryson Distributing, who is a longtime supporter of the needlearts

industry, a past TNNA board member and all-around great guy.

This year's Business Innovation Awards in Yarn went to companies that launched exciting, trend-driven innovations. We hope the winners' ideas inspire other wholesalers and retailers to think outside the box and implement new concepts. The Fiber Factor, Skacel Collections' online knitwear-design competition, won in the Yarn Wholesale category. People industry-wide are watching 12 designers compete in seven challenges, with each round's winning design sold as a kit. Given that 72 percent of knitters use social media to pursue knitting interests, this online event fits well with current trends; the business impact is undeniably good, with 28,000 YouTube views of the contestant videos.

The Yarnover Truck, a mobile yarn shop owned by Barbara Pushies and Maridee Nelson, won the yarn retailer Business Innovation Award. Their store literally carries high-quality yarns to parties, events and communities in

southern California. The shop focuses on carrying exclusive colors, sourcing local products and teaching classes, using social media to help get the word out. With their low overhead and crowd-funded start-up money (via Indiegogo), the shop saw robust first-year sales.

To wrap up this amazing weekend, India Hart Wood of Hart Business Research (HBR) presented preliminary results from our 2013 TNNA State of Specialty NeedleArts Survey. A great takeaway from these early results is that our industry's future looks bright. The full survey results, as well as business tools created by HBR that companies can apply to future business planning, will be available free this fall to TNNA members at [TNNA.org](http://TNNA.org). Non-members may purchase the results at [TNNA.org](http://TNNA.org).

TNNA, founded in 1974, is a professional organization representing wholesalers, manufacturers, distributors, designers, publishers and other companies supporting the needlearts industry. For more information, visit [www.tnna.org](http://www.tnna.org) or call (800) 889-8662.



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## Knit or Crochet for a Healthier You

**W**e know knitting and crocheting make us feel good. More and more studies are finding that these crafts actually are good for our health. The CYC is currently aggregating, curating and documenting the benefits for a report that will be out soon.

We started by reviewing well-established studies in which knitting and/or crochet were specifically mentioned, including those by the Harvard Medical School Mind/Body Institute (on the calming benefits of repetitive motion) and the Mayo Clinic (on how activities such as knitting delay the onset of dementia). In addition, we reviewed articles and books published in the consumer press.

However, we wanted to broaden the scope of our documentation, so we also posted the following request on our Facebook pages: "We are looking to interview health professionals who have studied the health benefits of activities such as knitting and crochet; health providers who recommend knitting and crocheting to patients; and people who credit knitting and cro-

chet in their journeys toward healing." To say we received a "healthy" response is putting it mildly. Along with responses from several healthcare professionals, we received dozens of compelling e-mails from the general public. Happy McGown's e-mail is a great example: "Knitting and crochet have provided me health benefits in physical, mental and psychological ways. I gained back the use of my hand by using knitting needles...."

Sony Hartley shared how knitting helped her cope with cancer treatments and inspired her to found a charity. "I am a lifelong knitter who was diagnosed with cancer a year ago. I have gone through surgery, several radiation treatments and two rounds of chemotherapy. Through it all, I took my knitting to all my appointments, knit while plugged into the chemo drip and even while lying on my back getting specialized radiation. After other patients expressed their impatience to finish treatments and 'wash away' the radiation marks on their bodies, I started knitting washcloths for them, which soon turned into a charity called New Start for several of MD

Anderson's Cancer Clinics. Both the knitting and this charity have helped me greatly in my fight against Stage III cancer."

Many teachers report similar results after introducing knitting and crochet to challenged students. Tahirra's e-mail explains how crafting helped her: "I have struggled with anxiety and depression my entire life. In the past, when anxiety hit, especially in social situations, the first thing I would do was pick at my skin. Knitting keeps my hands busy so that I cannot engage in harmful behavior. The activity is a mindfulness exercise, helping me focus on the task at hand and keeping my thoughts calm—not to mention the joy I feel when I present a knitted gift to a loved one."

When the documentation is completed this fall, the Council plans to circulate the summary widely to increase awareness of the many benefits of these healing needlearts.

The Craft Yarn Council was formed in 1981 to raise awareness about fibers. Visit [craftyarncouncil.com](http://craftyarncouncil.com) or [knitandcrochet.com](http://knitandcrochet.com) for more information.



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US	MM	UK	MM	US	MM
2	2.75	2	2.75	1	2.75
3	3.0	3	3.0	2	3.0
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170	44.75	170	44.75	169	44.75
171	45.0	171	45.0	170	45.0
172	45.25	172	45.25	171	45.25
173	45.5	173	45.5	172	45.5
174	45.75	174	45.75	173	45.75
175	46.0	175	46.0	174	46.0
176	46.25	176	46.25	175	





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# A Class By Itself

Attract customers and get cash registers ringing with guest teachers.

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

**A** fresh class offering, perhaps taught by a well-known instructor, can pep up your shop's slow season or bring blasé customers back into the fold. But before you dash off and e-mail that famous designer you've always wanted to meet, consider both your core customers and past class offerings to determine the subjects and types of classes that are best for your store.

Brooke Nico, co-owner of Kirkwood Knittery in St. Louis, frequently asks her best customers which classes and teachers they're most interested in. She's found that "many customers sign up for classes based on the personality of the teacher more than on the exact topic being taught. They want the experience of spending time with that teacher."

## Do your homework

Some popular instructors book classes a year or more in advance, while others require less lead time. Either way, schedule your classes as far in advance as you comfortably can. Try to avoid booking classes on holiday weekends or at other times when your customers are likely to be busy or traveling. Patty Lyons of Lion Brand Yarn Studio in New York City suggests keeping a list of topics that need to be discussed with prospective teachers before a class is booked.

"You'll want a description of the class, the maximum number of students per class, the length of the class, any homework and materials students will need to bring with them, the instructor's fee and what I call the teacher's 'terms'—travel requirements, dietary restrictions, equipment needed for the class and so on," says Lyons. Some instructors provide a ready-made catalog of classes that includes this information, but if it is not sent to you automatically, be sure to ask for it. After receiving that information, Lyons advises LYS owners to sit down with their calculators. "Add all of the expenses that the class will incur, then divide the total amount of your expenses by the amount you plan to charge for the class. The number you get is your break-even number of students."

If the cost of the class is starting to look prohibitive, consider the benefits of collaboration. Brooke Nico keeps an eye out for opportunities to share expenses with local guilds or shops. "We can schedule different classes at different

locations during the same weekend and split travel costs," she says. "Most people are very receptive to this idea. It reduces the costs for each shop, and the teacher ends up making more money because she's teaching additional classes." Book signings or meet-and-greets are another way to pull in customers who may not want to take a class but would like face time with a member of the knitterati.

## Spread the word

Once you've booked the teacher, it's time to get the word out. Your shop newsletter, website and blog are the obvious places to start. Alasdair Post-Quinn, who frequently hires teachers for the Common Cod Fiber Guild in Boston, takes an even broader approach: "We know that not all of our potential attendees frequent the same media, so we try to have as much media presence leading up to the event as possible. But we also print postcards advertising two or three upcoming events and hand stacks of them out at our meetings so people can drop them at their LYSes." And don't forget to send website links to the teacher well in advance; instructors want their classes to fill and will publicize teaching gigs on their own websites and social media, spreading the reach.

If the instructor is teaching a class that requires students to know certain skills, consider offering a separate course prior to the class to drum up interest. When the Lion Brand Yarn Studio offered a class that required students to use the Magic Loop method for sock knitting, Lyons scheduled a one-day class on that technique a few weeks before. She also keeps an eye out for lengthy homework assignments: "When classes include long or involved homework, we'll offer students help at a specific time to work through any problems. It brings customers to the shop, generates goodwill and makes the classes go far more smoothly."

## Savvy shelf stocking

Next, think about product tie-ins. Does the teacher have a new book out? Order copies (especially if the topic is tied to the class subject) so enthusiastic students can snap them up and get them signed on the spot. Are there certain yarns or notions that a knitter might want to stock up on after a particular class? Sock yarn and double-pointed or circular needles should get bumped to the front of the shelves before a sock-knitting

class; enticing skeins of lace-weight and blocking supplies should get pride of place when you offer a lace class. And don't forget the value of educating the instructor about the specific items your shop sells. Brooke Nico e-mails instructors a list of the yarn brands she carries before their visits.

"Nothing is worse than a teacher raving about a yarn we don't carry," she says ruefully. Nico, who frequently teaches lace-knitting classes herself, likes to arrive at a shop where she is teaching thirty minutes or more before the start of class so she can familiarize herself with the shop's inventory and use in-stock items as examples. If you're worried about seeming too direct, combine your "this is what we carry" information with follow-up inquiries about the teacher's needs. Reaching out ahead of time and making sure you're both prepared leads to happy, profitable classes for everyone involved.

## Communications 101

**A robust schedule of classes starts at home, before you invite outside guests. Think about developing policies for your teaching regulars.**

- **Survey staff members** to see who has the experience and desire to teach workhorse knitting classes (beginner knitting, for example). Play to staff members' strengths when assigning class topics.
- **Schedule classes** far enough in advance to allow for teacher prep and customer signups. Have a clear cancellation policy in effect from the get-go, including the minimum number of signups required to hold the class.
- **Don't expect** a single staff member to teach a class and mind the shop at the same time.
- **Decide ahead of time** how teachers will be paid. A flat per-class amount? An hourly fee that increases as more students enroll? A percentage of the class fee? Communicate this to teachers when they're hired.
- **Clarify who will create** any samples or handouts used to teach the class and who owns them should the teacher part ways with the shop.
- **Negotiate with the teacher** if you have concerns about other venues poaching your students or hiring her away. Put any agreement you reach in writing, including geographic or time restrictions (barring the teacher from teaching similar classes within X distance or X weeks of teaching at your shop).





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by  KRISTIN OMDAHL

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# Mind Your P's and Q's

Social media etiquette is newly charted territory, but it can make or break your online presence.

BY PAMELA WYNNE BUTLER

**B**usiness owners and managers want their online interactions to operate in the same spirit as their in-person ones, but online social worlds often reflect etiquette and norms that differ from those we encounter in a shop or on the street. You're used to setting high standards for how staff members interact with the public in your shop. How can you ensure that they translate to your shop's Internet presence?

For Yvonne Spencer, who manages Natural Stitches in Pittsburgh, it comes down to the "golden rule": Be mindful of others' sensibilities, and think about your store's guiding principles during every interaction. Achieving a consistent message across multiple platforms will require some planning, however.

During their regular meetings, the folks who work at A Verb for Keeping Warm in Oakland discuss social media. As a group, the small staff analyzes priorities, practices and outcomes related to the shop's Facebook, Twitter, Ravelry, Instagram and Pinterest accounts. Owner Kristine Vejar previously handled those outlets alone, but the shop has been working to build a more cohesive and collaborative approach to online communications.

Knit/Purl in Portland, Oregon, employs professionals who work exclusively on copywriting and online marketing, but owner Darcy Cameron echoes Vejar's call for consistency: "Whether [customers are] visiting the shop, e-mailing us, talking on the phone or reading the newsletter, they should all share a similar experience."

## Reach out in the right direction

Seek out, or create, the right forum for your message. Shelly Stilger, who owns Twist in Wichita, Kansas, says that social media has been "essential" to building her shop's local community. Like many yarn shops, Twist has its own Ravelry group, where the shop makes announcements about events and promotions and where customers chat among themselves.

Similarly, joining Ravelry groups for yarn suppliers or local fiber guilds, or "liking" them on Facebook from a store account, keeps your name visible and keeps you connected to them. But don't waste time promoting your business in irrelevant groups or sharing every development

or thought. Your customers may not need to know that you just received a new shipment of everyday wool yarn, but they do need to know that a big event, a new subscription club or a hard-to-find yarn is coming up or coming in.

When folks online reach out to you, reciprocate in a personal, individual way. Avoid "Thanks for the retweet! Hope to see you soon!" messages, which are visibly insincere when sent to a group of people.

## Keep it professional

Consider having a dedicated, stand-alone shop account on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Ravelry. The shop account can focus on communications that build the business and its brand, leaving you free to use your private accounts to join groups and express opinions that might not be relevant or appropriate to associate with the business. This extends to political and potentially controversial topics. Consider whether, when and how to link the shop with a particular cause or issue. Is it in line with the shop's brand identity or the way you want people to think of the shop? Might you offend someone? If so, whom? And is it worth it?

## Give credit where credit is due

If you have the resources, creating your own content with free patterns and beautiful photographs is a great way to build your brand's visual aesthetic. But you may want or need to use other patterns and images as well. In that case, be sure to ask before you share. Many knitters and designers are happy to let yarn shops use their images. Asking is also a great way to get in touch and make contact with popular indie designers and other vendors—and they'll be more likely to think of your shop the next time they're in town with a trunk show or book tour.

On Facebook, it's considered more polite to use the "share" button when you find interesting content, rather than re-posting it as if it were new from you. And when posting interesting designs, yarns or photos, it's good form to identify the creator in a caption and link to his or her account as appropriate.

## Consider the medium

Whether or not you delegate responsibility for

online communications, and regardless of the model you choose, it's important to manage your social media and Internet presence as thoughtfully as you do in-store interactions and attend to the specific quirks of online communication, remembering how tone of voice can be difficult to convey in text. Extending your standards for communication and customer service to social media and the Internet is merely a matter of understanding the medium and translating your philosophy.

**Pamela Wynne Butler** is a writer and knitwear designer living in Flint, Michigan.

## To-Dos for Negative Reviews

People may occasionally react negatively and publicly online to something you say or share or to an experience in your shop. If that happens, think carefully about whether and how to respond. Does the comment need to be addressed at all? Do you have customers who can effectively address it for you? After all, it's often better to have loyal fans speak enthusiastically on your behalf than to go on the defensive yourself.

If you decide to address a criticism publicly online, do so positively, professionally and firmly. As Shelly Stilger of Twist points out, "If you engage with negativity, it's like engaging in a yelling match in public—no one looks good." If you decide that the comment merits a response, often the best tactic is to respond privately with a direct message or e-mail. Internet bluster tends to dissolve in the face of sincere, personal customer service.

When one visitor posted a critical review of Natural Stitches online, it helped that there was already a sea of glowing five-star reviews surrounding it. Store manager Yvonne Spencer says she took a step back and thought about how to respond with courtesy, professionalism and good nature. She expressed regret that the customer hadn't had a good experience and invited the reviewer to return to the shop for a second look; a few months later, the customer did come back to the store, then returned to the website and posted a revised, strongly positive review.



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# Make It Memorable

Creative promotions—big ideas and little ones alike—can help increase sales at your store and bring in new customers.

BY CATHY RUMFELT

**S**easonal sales can be profitable, but relying on them to promote your shop is not a lucrative business strategy. Fresh, fun promotions rolled out throughout the year will entice new customers and keep your loyal ones coming back for more. Be inspired by the successful approaches taken by these yarn shops.

## Make a big splash

In 2011, Ball and Skein and More in Cambria, California, entered a float in the Pinedorado Parade, held every Labor Day weekend in the shop's hometown. "One of our avid knitters and her husband volunteered to help us enter," says co-owner Oz Barron. "Through our small rural town's amazing network, we ended up with a flatbed trailer, complete with hay bales for seats, pulled by a forklift." The store got several knitters and crocheters to take a ride, knitting and crocheting the entire way.

The float was a hit. "Two years later, people around town still bring it up," Barron says. He believes that the sense of community the project engendered was just as effective in promoting the shop as the float itself.

Patty Armstrong of Sweet Pea's Yarn & Gifts in St. Clair, Michigan, hosted a mini-cruise on the St. Clair River. "My store has a beautiful view of the river," says Armstrong. "From the lounge where customers knit, the view of giant freighters is incredible. The cruise was a way to take this unique view even further."

Armstrong's slowest sales months are June, July and August, so she scheduled the cruise for early August: "It seemed like a great opportunity for a brief summer getaway," she says. The four-hour cruise, called Flowers on the Water, included a demonstration on knitting flowers, a box lunch, goodie bags and door prizes that got the more than 50 attendees thinking about warm-weather knitting.

## Play some games

Stacy Klaus, owner of the Knitting Nest in Austin, Texas, has realized after almost seven years in business that the best promotions are the ones that depend on the customer: "We have what I call Shake It Up Sunday. I use an app on my iPad that has dice on it, and cus-

tomers get to roll the dice for a discount—whatever they roll, they get that percent off their purchases," explains Klaus. "They love it. People get quite competitive and will often buy more than one thing to try to get the highest discount of the night."

Similarly, Klaus has a Lucky Duck Sale every Friday the 13th. "I float rubber ducks with different discounts written on the bottom in a tub of water. Then I let customers pick a duck to determine their discounts," she says.

Enticing customers with carnival games to earn a discount may fall outside your comfort zone, but the novelty of the approach can bring customers into the shop and encourage more buying. Use your smartphone or camera to snap happy customers mid-game and post on social media to share the fun.

## Eat and be merry

People, as we know, love to eat, so any pretext for a party should bring customers to your store for a nosh. The Knitting Nest in Weyauwega, Wisconsin [no relation to the Austin shop], has been open for almost two years, and the one time they decided to splurge on a promotion, they found success. "Our most successful promotion to date celebrated our one-year anniversary. We threw a party," owner Patrick Martin says. "We spent some money on a cake, which the folks who attended really enjoyed. We had our best day since we've been open."

Yarnie's in Abilene, Texas, has also celebrated with food—Texas style. The store promoted World Wide Knit in Public Day and celebrated the store's anniversary by setting up a canopy in the parking lot, from which they fed their customers. "My husband and family served a brisket meal," says owner Linda Nygaard. "Everyone loved it."

You don't need a store-related reason to host a party, of course. Stacy Klaus of the Knitting Nest honors her favorite actor: "I am a big Tom Hanks fan, and every year on July 9, his birthday, we have a big T.H. Birthday Sale and Trivia Contest. Everyone saves 10 percent, and correct trivia answers can earn customers another 10 percent off."

Figuring out what excites your customers can inspire new promotional ideas. Focusing on

local customs or sights can involve your entire community. When Patrick Martin moved The Knitting Nest to a new location, he paraded their mascot, a metal figure named Birdie, down Main Street each day, leading customers to the new shop. "Not only was it great fun, but it created quite a stir on our store's Facebook page," says Martin. For any promotion, the goal is to generate enthusiasm about your store. If you get people talking (and clicking and sharing), consider it a success.

Cathy Rumfelt, a writer living in Cumming, Georgia, loves any excuse to eat good food and knit.

## Get Ideas Rolling

Don't overthink it: Creative promotions are easier than you think.

- **Keep it simple.** Something as small as playing a game can encourage people to buy more yarn. "You might say I'm playing on people's general love of gambling," says Stacy Klaus of her in-store dice game. "But it works."
- **Focus on the slow seasons.** At Yarnie's in Abilene, Texas, the Christmas in July sale gives 25 percent off per skein for each canned item brought to donate to the local food bank—with no limit. "This is the slowest time of the year, so it helps quite a bit," says owner Linda Nygaard.
- **Consider what works for your location.** The Wisconsin Knitting Nest is located in the small town of Weyauwega, but it's right off a major highway. "By far, our best promotion has been our billboard," says owner Patrick Martin. "It's not too unusual, but it's very effective."
- **Have fun with the little things.** Linda Nygaard always tries to make things interesting, even in her e-mails: "In our last e-mail, about being closed on July 4, we included a photo of a man with a 'Born to Knit' tattoo." In the e-mail, she asked customers to come to the store and tell her what the tattoo said to get 10 percent off. "It seems to be an effective way to get more people to read the e-mails we send out," she says.



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# It's Not Me, It's You

The customer isn't always right. Here's how to tell them it's time to say good-bye.

BY DARYL BROWER

Every store has one: the customer whose demands, rudeness or unreasonableness makes salespeople want to hide behind the counter and other customers cringe. Stores often put up with the headaches these customers cause because they think it's the right thing to do (the customer is always right, right?) or fear the repercussions—bad-mouthing both in person and online—of showing them the door. But some customers just aren't worth the energy or effort.

"When your customers have reasonable expectations, it's easy to honor their requests. But when they cross the line to unrealistic demands and abusive behavior, the 'always right' policy is questionable," says Debra Ellis, president of the Wilson Ellis Company, a marketing consulting group. "'The customer is always right' generally works, but it has limitations that can have a long-term effect on morale, loyalty and profitability."

M., owner of a bustling yarn shop on the West Coast who prefers to remain anonymous, ran into those limitations last year. Sent to the shop by a local knitting instructor to purchase supplies, the customer who walked into M.'s store one Saturday afternoon was full of complaints from the get-go. "She was rude and condescending to the staff and voiced the opinion that she was probably a 'different' type of customer for us, because she was younger and smarter than our average knitter," M. explains. "She wanted to know why our yarn cost so much more than [a big-box chain store]." She also refused to purchase the yarn the teacher had selected for the class, instead choosing a less expensive yarn that was—as a staffer tried to explain to her—a different weight and fiber and unsuitable for the project. She returned a week later, complaining about the way the yarn worked up.

"When I politely pointed out that the yarn she'd purchased was a different weight than the one the teacher had indicated, she became agitated and accused me of trying to up-sell her," M. recalls. This became the pattern during the customer's next four visits.

M. did her best to smooth over the incidents, adhering to the "customer is always right" mentality. But she was uncomfortable

with the way this person treated her staff. According to Ellis, that's a valid concern. "Forcing your staff to deal with obnoxious, unrealistic and abusive customers takes a toll on morale," she says.

So M. made sure she was the only person to work with the customer. By dealing with her exclusively, she "could steer her away from not only my staffers but also from my regular knitters, to save them from insult," she says.

That's another warning sign that a customer needs to go. "The time you spend trying to satisfy the impossible customer decreases the attention you can pay to the good ones," Ellis says. "Rewarding [bad customers] reduces your resources without a return on investment."

The breaking point came when the customer returned yet again to complain about the yarn and needles she'd purchased and demanded to return both. "When I reminded her that we had talked about the size incompatibility of her yarn and needles the last time she was in, she told me I must have dreamed the conversation," M. relates. "I pointed out our no-return policy on needles—it's posted on the wall next to our needles, on the register and printed on all receipts. At that point she told me, 'If you don't do what I want, I'm going to leave here and trash you all over the Internet.' She continued to argue, be rude and use profanity until I finally realized I was enduring all of this abuse to hold onto a \$20 sale. I refunded her needle purchase and told her to she was to leave the shop and not ever return."

The decision to ban the customer from the store, says M., was empowering. "By allowing her to return the needles for cash, I gave her exactly what she wanted. That put me in a much better position to tell her she could no longer come to our store. I told her, 'I've given you what you came for. Now you need to leave and never come back.' I put myself in a position of power regarding her leaving."

True to her word, the customer did trash the shop online. "By morning she'd posted on Knitmap, Yelp, Google and our Ravelry group describing the poor customer service she'd received," M. says. The Ravelry post was removed, and M. spent a day responding (in a calm, factual manner) to the posts on the other sites. "It took some work but really wasn't

that bad," she says. "I think too many people are intimidated by the idea that someone can post a bad review of their shops. As long you take the time to post a non-offended and factual reply, you're fine. The three inflammatory reviews of my shop have been up for more than a year. No one has ever mentioned them, nor have I seen a decline in business."

Daryl Brower is a freelance writer and editor and a former retail manager who can recall several customers she wishes could have been banished—particularly the one who regularly returned full services of china and glassware with bits of food still stuck to the plates.

## Showing Them the Door

Has a customer crossed the line? Here's how to ask her to leave.

- **Think carefully.** Is his or her behavior truly a "firing" offense? Have you really tried to meet the customer's needs and expectations and found them unreasonable? Banning should be a last resort.
- **Be professional.** If you've decided that it's time to show a customer the door, do it politely and in person. Don't delegate to an employee; this is a task that needs to be handled by the owner or manager.
- **Keep calm.** No matter how angry or frustrated you are by a customer's bad behavior, keep your emotions out of it. Don't let things escalate to a shouting match.
- **Offer alternatives.** Suggest that the customer may be happier shopping at another store that better suits his or her particular needs and recommend any that you know.
- **Be prepared for the rebound.** If a banned customer returns to the shop, instruct employees to bring it to your attention immediately. Remind the customer that she is no longer welcome and reiterate the reasons why. If she refuses to leave, calmly and quietly state that you can no longer serve her and that if she will not vacate the premises on her own, the police will be called to escort her out.



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# Vietnam

*Handwork is alive and well on the Indochina Peninsula*

BY STACEY TROCK

Vietnam, I observed during my time there, is a quickly modernizing country with roots still deeply steeped in tradition. In the cities, streets are packed with bicycles, but they are pedaling past shops selling the latest electronic equipment. Chickens are routinely kept—on the balconies of high-rise buildings. And in the country, women in traditional handwoven clothing chat on cell phones.

It is impossible to discuss current Vietnamese culture without reflecting on its history of foreign influence. The current population of Vietnam is composed of 54 distinct ethnic groups. Once dominated by China, the country was occupied by Japan during World War II. The French colonized the country in the 19th century and exerted control for almost a century, until they were expelled in the mid-1950s following the First Indochina War. And of course the American military was in country for close to two decades. Vietnam's needlework culture, too, is perfectly described by this blend of old and new, the mixing of native and foreign.

Handicrafts are well established here. In yarn shops across America, you'll find Lantern Moon's tape measures and stitch markers, hand-crocheted by locals outside Hanoi, as well as other Lantern Moon goods sourced in Vietnam.



Joel Woodcock, co-owner of Lantern Moon, says that he has no trouble finding crocheters there to work for him. Other crafts are prominent as well, depending on the region.

The Northern Highlands of Vietnam are famous for their landscape of terraced rice paddies carved into mountainsides. This chilly climate is home to a number of ethnic minority groups that live according to traditional ways; the largest group, the Black Hmong, are named for their traditional costume of indigo-dyed fabric. In mountain towns such as Sapa, you'll encounter scores of

Black Hmong women with what looks like twine wrapped around their hands and hanging off their belts. These women are actually hand-spinning the hemp grown on their farms into yarn to weave fabric. Take a trek into the mountainside and you'll spot large patches of indigo growing, vats of indigo dye in backyards and maybe a weaving loom in someone's living room. The art of spinning, dyeing and weaving flourished in this part of the country, but it is largely viewed as a traditional craft done by minority groups. A keen shopper will be able to find some unmarked skeins of yarn (often used for decorative embroidery), but by and large the needlework items for sale are finished pieces.

Traveling to the cities exposes you not only to new food and a change in climate but to a different yarn culture as well. Here, knitting and crochet (a result of European influence) have taken greater hold, and the tradition is being passed down through the generations. Saigon-based crocheter Vy Phuong Cao tells me, "I first learned to crochet from my mother. And should I have a daughter, I will teach her as well." In Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (called Saigon by locals), the temperatures are tropical and markets abound, meaning people have little incentive to weave/knit/crochet their own clothing. Hot temperatures push stitchers



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF STACEY TROCK

toward accessories and small items such as shawls and amigurumi.

It will come as no surprise that in a city like Saigon, where the average low temperature in December is 71 degrees Fahrenheit, cotton and acrylic yarns prevail over wool. At Ben Thanh Market, one of the largest and most popular in the city, you'll find a few shops on Le Thanh Ton Street (amid other fabric/craft stores) that sell yarn. Neither the yarn nor the display is glamorous: Plastic bags filled with acrylic yarns are piled on shelves and the sidewalk. You'll find a few recognized Western brands (including Caron Simply Soft) along with Vietnamese and Chinese yarns. The stock of knitting needles is limited to aluminum straights sitting in a mug. Shopping on this street certainly won't satisfy your craving for luxurious yarns, but it's an accessible choice favored by locals.

Hanoi is similarly stocked with markets and even houses a yarn store in the historic old quarter. Head over to Len Thai Min (at 7B Dinh Liet) and you'll find an entire store (albeit only a couple meters wide) dedicated to yarn.



This shop too subscribes to the piles-of-plastic-bags method of storage, but the selection of cottons and acrylics exceeds what you'll find in smaller market stalls. Occasionally, a store selling yarn will display a sample of a finished sweater, but shoppers shouldn't expect to see samples made from the yarn they're planning to buy.

Those looking to save a little money in Saigon can visit Dai Quang Minh Market in District 5 to purchase yarns at wholesale prices. Penny-pinching shoppers, beware. These markets abound with counterfeit and misleadingly labeled merchandise. I've spotted faux "Versace" fabric for dollars a yard and "Advanced Cashmere" yarn that turned out to be 100 percent acrylic. Pay attention to the quality of the yarn you're buying: Your purchase might not be the deal you imagined.

But it bears mentioning that there is another form of needlework that is far more prominent than knitting and crocheting in Vietnam: cross-stitch. The availability of low-cost kits from China and the ease of getting started has done much to popularize this needleart. Walk through any market and you're likely to find multiple vendors cross-stitching in their stalls.

Stacey Trock blogs about knitting, crocheting and more at [www.freshstitches.com](http://www.freshstitches.com).



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# Sticks & Strings

## Lansing, Michigan

BY DARYL BROWER

**W**hen one door shuts (or in this case is locked behind you), another opens. At least that's how shop owners Kathy McCormack (below, left) and Sabrina Woodward (right) saw it. When the Lansing, Michigan, yarn store for which they both worked—McCormack as a sales associate and Woodward as manager—went out of business in September 2010, the two found themselves keys to a new retail space and opened their own store, Sticks & Strings, just six weeks later.

Moving from the unemployment line to entrepreneurship in such a short time might give



pause to some, but McCormack and Woodward didn't want to give that newly opened door a chance to slam shut. "We didn't think too much about it, which was probably a good thing," jokes McCormack of their decision to open a shop of their own. "But we knew that with the closing there would be a need for another store, and given the time of year [fall is busiest for yarn sales in their neck of the woods] we figured it was 'do it now or never.' Customers were left without a home base, and we worried that if we waited, we'd lose them to other shops."

They found a retail space in a charming old house in Lansing's Old Town, just 5 miles west of the shuttered shop. "Kathy crunched the numbers, and I called on all the vendors I'd worked with in my job as manager," Woodward explains. "I told them what we wanted to do and asked if they'd sell to us." The answer was a resounding yes, and McCormack and Woodward soon had a cozy setup stocked with the yarns that had been most popular with their former employer—Cascade, Noro, Tahki and Crystal Palace among

them. The doors opened on November 12, and things have been running pretty much tangle-free ever since.

They may have rushed into opening, but McCormack and Woodward did think carefully about the kind of atmosphere they wanted to cultivate: a cozy, inviting space that welcomed knitters of all levels to come in and knit but also encouraged them to spend. "The store we worked for had a huge selection with a lot of space and comfortable couches for sitting and knitting," Woodward explains. "It was lovely; people sat and knit and socialized—but they didn't buy. We didn't want that to happen here."

Fortunately, the two-story layout of the shop let the newly minted owners work out a floor plan with dedicated areas for shopping and socializing. "We put classroom space and tables for knitting groups upstairs," McCormack explains. While there are a few small seats on the main level, the yarn, samples and tools are what garner attention. The defined boundary, says McCormack, encourages a separate shopping focus. "When they're downstairs, they're thinking about what they can buy, not what everyone is working on or talking about at the tables," she says.

Guilds and groups are more than welcome in the upstairs space, which also plays host to a roster of classes as varied as the knitters who walk through the door. "It's an eclectic group: college students, professionals, grandmas, stay-at-home moms—all of them at different skill levels," Woodward says of the knitters. Courses range from the wildly popular "Never Touched a Needle" to more advanced studies in techniques like stranded colorwork. "We encourage customers to take the next step," says McCormack. "We're always asking, 'What do you want to learn next?' And then we plan classes that build off those needs."

The area has its share of yarn shops (there are at least three others within a 20-mile radius), so McCormack and Woodward know they have to work hard to keep their customers interested. "We understand that people have choices," says Woodward. "They don't have to come here. So we make it as friendly and welcoming and useful as we can and try not to overlap with what our competitors are offering."

Service is also key: Two part-time employees



are former coworkers, brought in for both their skills and attitude. "We knew how both of them worked with customers," Woodward explains. "They understand and support the atmosphere we're trying to create, and that helps tremendously." Their own yarn shop experience is also a benefit, though Woodward admits that there have been some surprises along the way. "I used to wonder [of her former boss], 'What's he doing all day?'" she laughs. "Well, now I know."

Still the two partners have no regrets about walking through that door that opened three years ago. They're eager to expand, both in space and offerings (plans for adding spinning and weaving are in the works) and are looking forward to what comes next. "We feel blessed," Woodward says. "We both love what we do."



### Snapshot

#### Sticks & Strings, LLC

1107 N. Washington Avenue

Lansing, MI 48906

(517) 372-1000; [www.sticksandstringslansing.com](http://www.sticksandstringslansing.com)

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**Square footage:** 1,000

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BY LESLIE PETROVSKI

# Let's Put on a SHOW!

Envious of crocheted-tissue-box-free craft shows like Boston's Bazaar Bizarre and the Renegade Craft Fair in Chicago, Trish Hoskins, owner of Crafty Planet in Minneapolis, joined forces with other like-minded crafters and artisans to start a similar show in the Midwest. "[In the early 2000s] there were a few hip 'handmade' shows around the country, but none locally," she says. "They were the inspiration. We wanted something like that here."

In 2005, the group hosted the inaugural Holiday No Coast Craft-o-Rama, a juried craft show featuring 50-odd vendors. The 3,000 visitors who turned out swamped the location to such an extent that the following year organizers moved the show to the Midtown Global Market, a large public marketplace with international and local food vendors, crafters and importers. Today, the show welcomes more than 10,000 attendees over the course of one-and-a-half days; last year, organizers added a one-day outdoor summer version they call "No Coast Takes a Field Trip."

## Makers Making Money

No Coast is among dozens of juried—or, in current parlance, "curated"—craft shows nationwide that are providing markets for the modern craft movement. (In some towns you can't swing a sock monkey without

encountering pop-up tents and aproned vendors.) Part and parcel of both the DIY phenomenon and the economic downturn, which forced young people stymied by poor job prospects to develop alternative income streams, the next-generation craft scene offers opportunities for retailers and wholesalers alike.

Participating in No Coast, Hoskins observes, generates income; she says that booth sales double her typical daily take. But participation also increases visibility and creates goodwill. "A lot of vendors already shop at Crafty Planet, but helping them find success [at the show] means they come into the shop and buy even more stuff."

Bringing the cool-craft-show concept to the Mile High City was a big part of the reason Fancy Tiger founder Jaime Jennings started the Holiday Handmade Craft Fair in 2006. Premiering in an art gallery, the first event was small but proved Denver had a taste for curated crafts. Since then, Holiday Handmade has become one of the premier holiday markets in the city. Currently housed in the Sherman Street Event Center, the spectacular Arts-and-Crafts-era former headquarters of Colorado's Shriners, the fair hosts 60-some vendors ranging from local yarn makers and leatherworkers to artisanal food purveyors and attracts 5,000-plus visitors.



Fancy Tiger also feels the benefits of added exposure that Hoskins mentioned. By putting on Holiday Handmade, Fancy Tiger has taken on a leadership role in Denver's indie craft scene. When the event is mentioned in *The Denver Post* or the city's alternative weekly, *Westword*, so too is the hip yarn and fabric shop.

Amber Corcoran, who joined Fancy Tiger as a partner in 2008, says they have no definitive numbers on whether Holiday Handmade is a revenue generator for the store, though she notes that every show Saturday, the shop enjoys one of its best days of the year. "It's not a conventional way to advertise our business, but it lets people know we're part of the community—and it makes them think of us when they think about buying craft supplies."

Holiday Handmade is one of the rare shows nationwide run by a single shop. Putting on an event of this magnitude is an enormous effort. Corcoran observes that she and Jennings start planning each show six months in advance. "It's a lot of work. Six months out of the year, we're working on advertising and promotions and looking for vendors. And going through the applications and jurying is a huge part of the process."

## Just Show Up

A craft show doesn't have to be a citywide event held in a huge facility. Last year, as part of the neighborhood's West Third Street Holiday Street Party, Knit Culture Studio in Los Angeles invited a handful of its favorite local pattern designers, vendors and even a local illustrator to take part in an in-store show that they called Holiday Yarn + Craft Fair.

The show was intimate in scale but allowed Knit Culture to showcase vendors' complete lines—including products from Baah Yarn and bag and notions manufacturer Slipped Stitch Studios—that normally weren't carried in the store. This made it possible for Knit Culture to see how customers responded (or not) to items and adjust their ordering based on this informal focus group. "Our regular customers really enjoyed it," explains Emma Gordon, blogger and event coordinator for the store. "They picked up a few gifts, were able to purchase different colorways and got to see all the trunk-show samples in the store. We enjoyed it more as a way to show off our favorite local designers. We got to showcase people we support and carry in-store."

In turn, those local vendors showcased Knit Culture. Before inviting participants, Gordon made sure they would put forth some effort to market their involvement. The yarn shop even provided graphics that companies could use to promote the event. "We do pay attention to whether they are going to help us market or not," she says. "It's all about promoting everybody who's involved."

Born out of the indie craft movement, Baltimore's Threadquarters, a brand-new "multicraftual" yarn, fabric and needlework shop that opened in March (owners Marlo Jacobson and Allison Fomich and a team of other guerrillas famously yarn-bombed the city's Frank Zappa statue with a beard and Santa hat), sponsors the Charm City Craft Mafia's summer Pile of Craft show. For \$200, Threadquarters' logo is displayed on signage, the website and in the program; the "mafia" blogs about them before the event; and the shop gets cookies and stickers as a thank-you. Fomich, a jewelry designer (tigerlillyshop on Etsy) who had her own booth at Pile of Craft, gave out Threadquarters coupons and talked up their shop.

In the weeks following the June 22 show, Jacobson estimates that 20 or so people came into the store, mentioning the event as a reason for their visit. "I would definitely do it again," she says of their \$200 investment. "It created awareness. Our information went out to the 15,000 followers of [Craft Mafia's] blog. And we're confident that [new] customers will trickle in over time."

In the case of fabric-and-yarn shop Stitches in Seattle, owner Amy Ellsworth began sponsoring the Urban Craft Uprising holiday show during its inaugural year, 2004. In nine years, the show has grown to become the largest in the Pacific Northwest, attracting upward of 10,000 visitors. For

her support, Stitches gets its logo on promo materials and can include goodies in the legendary show swag bags customers line up for.

Does it bring in business? "I don't have any idea," Ellsworth says. "But it puts me out there in a community that's into crafting, so it helps us gain visibility. Urban Craft Uprising has gotten to be so giant that having my name in front of all those people certainly can't hurt."

Money isn't the primary reason these New Domesticity retailers are getting into the show business. Fancy Tiger has, among other events, sponsored the Craft Pavilion at the Denver County Fair, a hip, urban take on traditional fairs. It's also cross-promoted the local Horseshoe Market and created pop-up shops at The Makerie Retreats in nearby Boulder. "We definitely enjoy being part of it," Corcoran says of their work with The Makerie. "It's about being involved, taking classes with instructors who are there. It's nice to spend a weekend being part of a really cool retreat."

"We've preferred to do sponsorships not monetarily," she continues, "but by asking, How can we help you and how can you help us get our name out—and how can we improve the community we have going here?"



## What to know before you do a show

### • Understand your audience.

If you're interested in vending at a craft show, recognize that the show targets craft consumers, makers and other creatives, only some of whom might be knitters and crocheters. Not everyone will be a yarn buyer.

### • Don't step on toes.

If you vend at a craft show, offer items (patterns, tools, project bags) that don't compete with the hand spinners and hand dyers who might also be participating. You don't want to alienate your audience.

### • Negotiate your sponsorship.

If you're not cash rich, suggests Trish Hoskins of Crafty Planet, discuss in-kind sponsorship. What is your 3,000-stitcher list worth in terms of marketing muscle to show impresarios, or show mentions in your ads?

### • Promote like crazy.

Whether you're vending at a craft show, sponsoring one or launching your own show, use every outlet you can think of to get the word out. Facebook, tweet, Instagram, give out fliers with purchases, run stories in your newsletter, submit press releases to local media and encourage vendors to do likewise. The more crafty peeps who attend a show, the better you'll do financially and in terms of visibility.

### • Insist on full disclosure.

If you are considering sponsorship, make sure you know exactly what you're getting and what you're giving vis-à-vis your participation—in writing.

# *Samples* **Sell**



You know that model garments are a must. Are you displaying them to their best advantage?

BY DARYL BROWER



## Hang Ups

At Nina in Chicago, sweaters, shawls and scarves are displayed on sleek metal hangers. The look is clean and upscale, fully in keeping with the mood owner Nina Rubin has carefully cultivated for the shop. Hanging samples is an easy, efficient and relatively inexpensive way to display them, but doing so involves more than slipping sweaters onto hangers culled from your bedroom closet and calling it a day. At Nina, the hangers work because Rubin chose a look that's pared down and pleasing.

"There's nothing worse than walking into a shop and seeing garments crowded on racks on junky, mismatched hangers," says knitwear designer Josh Bennett, who spent his early yarn career shaping up the displays at the famed Yarn Company in Manhattan. And he has a point. Each sample hanging in your shop represents time, effort and money (things that your customers will also invest in the project), so don't display pieces as though they're an afterthought. "You need to do it right," he says. "The look should be upscale boutique, not thriftshop."

To that end Bennett advises taking the advice of Joan Crawford: "No wire hangers from the dry cleaner," he admonishes. "They don't provide enough support for knits, and they look cheap." The same goes for simple plastic models. Instead, opt for quality wooden pieces or attractive flocked styles in hues that match your shop's color scheme (discounters including Marshall's and TJ Maxx often stock both types; see "Where'd You Find That," page 42, for wholesale resources). If you must use plastic for cost or other reasons, think substantial, expensive-looking suit hangers à la the men's department at Nordstrom's, not the flimsy wire-topped styles found on chain store rounders. Or take Bennett's advice and crochet around them using a quality neutral-colored yarn: "It looks nice and helps keep the sweaters from slipping." Above all, make sure they match—and don't crowd the racks.

Threading wooden dowel rods through the sleeves and suspending sweaters from the ceiling or on a wall is another tried-and-true display option, but it's one Bennett says should be approached carefully. "I understand that stores try to save on floor space by hanging samples up high, and it can look quite nice," he says. "But as a display method, it's completely unshoppable. It's essential that you put garments within reach of your customers. They need to be able to touch the fibers and try the sweaters on."

Cindy Fitzpatrick, who owns Conversational Threads in Emmaus, Pennsylvania, agrees, so she does a mix of displays. She places pieces on loan from outside sources out of reach on high-hanging rods but gives customers easy access to samples knit by the shop, placing them on Shaker pegs, folding them over the backs of chairs or slipping them on mannequins. "I think it's important that customers get to try samples on," she says. "Just like in any clothing store, if you can get a customer to try on a garment, she may end up buying something she'd never have considered before."

## Form Fitting

Hangers have their place, but they can give sweaters a shapeless quality. If you want to make a garment a focal point of a display, a mannequin or dress form can make all the difference. There are a variety of styles to choose from, but for sweater display the traditional Wolf dress-maker's form (or similar models) can be a real workhorse on the sales

floor. Most forms of this type are covered in a neutral fabric (so they'll work with any color scheme) and can be pinned without damage, making it easy to shape and primp samples. Since they're made for designing and fitting, they show the sweater as it is, letting customers get a good look at construction details and how the fabric hangs when knitted. Nina Rubin is a fan of these forms, usually outfitting the bottom half with a simple skirt or pants in a dark color and hanging the sweater or shawl on top with a minimum of fuss.

Mannequins—the plastic bodies found in department stores and other clothing shops—are another option. Varieties abound, from half round torsos (Cindy Fitzgerald uses these for scarves, slipping a plain white turtleneck over the form to dress it up a bit) to full-sized figures in a variety of poses, both with heads and without. Whether you choose to use forms or mannequins, rules similar to those for hangers apply. Keep the look clean and cohesive—in other words, don't mix antique dress forms with ultramodern mannequins in a display or the look will be disjointed. Aim for a model that echoes the vibe of your store—be it ultra-elegant, warm and homey, or artfully edgy.

To keep garments looking their best, Khaliah Jones, fashion stylist for *Vogue Knitting* magazine, says a garment steamer or good iron with vertical steam is a must. "It's key, when styling on a dress form, that the sweater is well steamed and pressed so you can neatly and accurately display the way a garment is worn and the way it hangs," she says. She also suggests padding the sleeves with tissue or fiberfill (the kind found in craft stores) for window displays (though you shouldn't stuff lace or other loosely knit garments since the filling will show through the stitches).

Josh Bennett agrees that these tactics are great for window displays but are not as helpful for store models that need to be tried on. "It's not like a clothing boutique, where you see the garment beautifully styled on

a mannequin next to a rack of identical sweaters you can take into the dressing room," he says. "Knitters want to try things on, touch the yarn, examine the stitchwork and construction. If you have to pull out tissue paper every time someone wants to take a closer look, it's not a very effective use of your samples." Having multiple samples of a sweater on hand is one way to work around the difficulties of dressing and undressing a mannequin—you can hang garments next to the form or stack them on a nearby shelf. If you don't have the budget or manpower to make multiple samples and are intent on styling your dress forms to perfection, Bennett suggests supplying swatches so customers can at least feel the garment and examine the stitches up close. "It's also an opportunity to show them other colorways," he says.

## Fold Here

A stack of sweaters (or shawls or blankets) can make for a stunning display. "It's a great way to draw attention to them," says Bennett. Display manufacturers sell pieces that are designed for this purpose, and many offer units that allow you to attach a mannequin and shelves and create different, changeable levels. "You can put a sweater on a model and then stack sweaters or scarves in other colorways next to it," suggests Bennett. Regular maintenance is crucial to displays of this type—you don't want a sloppy pile of sweaters or blankets. "Spend as much time as you can refolding pieces so they always look neat," he says. "Make it a regular part of your duties." (continued on page 42)

### Fact: Samples sell yarn.

With the help of store owners, fashion stylists and a knitwear designer, we've created a go-to guide to showing off your model garments (sweaters, hats, scarves and the like) and making them work for you.

Folding also works well for scarves, which can be arranged in pretty baskets or piled on shelves. “Keep them near the yarns they’re knit in so customers can make the connection between the sample and the tools needed to make it,” says Bennett. The same holds for sweaters that hang or are placed on mannequins. “Keeping things together makes it easy for customers to shop.”

## The Small Stuff

Hats, scarves and socks have their own needs. Khaliah Jones likes to sort small items by color and finds that laying them flat and slipping them onto forms work equally well. “If we’re shooting socks flat, I’ll line them up in a row, partially touching, in a way that makes the colors visually appealing,” she says. “It’s also fun to display them on a bunch of foot mannequins. A string of socks suspended with clothespins makes for a playful, customer-accessible display, as items can be clipped and unclipped as needed.”

At Conversational Threads, accessories are almost always placed on mannequins. “We have a hand mannequin for mittens, a foot mannequin for socks,” says Cindy Fitzpatrick. “I think these items look better when they have some dimension.” Hats in particular need shaping, something easily accomplished with tissue paper or fiberfill. “I don’t like head forms,” says Nina Rubin. Instead, she stuffs caps with tissue and lines them up on a shelf or uses other items to give them shape. “Upside-down vases work great,” she says. “Or sometimes we’ll clip them to a photo display piece.”

Fitzpatrick, too, has qualms about head forms, particularly the Styrofoam variety. “I think they’re creepy,” she admits. The two she does own have been upcycled with needle-felted roving—a tip she picked up at a Yarn Market News Smart Business Conference.

## Accessorizing Is Everything—or Is It?

Adding purchased accessories (jewelry and the like) to a display can add character and make a consumer look at the clothes more positively, says Jones. Bennett agrees, noting that fully dressed mannequins “tell a story that draws a customer in.” But don’t overdo it, he says: “The sweater should be the star.” Fitzpatrick and Rubin too like to keep things simple, adding shawl pins to models (a great way to cross-merchandise accessory items in stock), but nothing too fussy.

If you do decide to accessorize your pieces, do so with care and look to magazine and department store displays for ideas. A necklace or a pin is usually enough to dress up a design, but if the neckline is low, consider filling it in by layering a plain cami or tee underneath. “Many women will not try on or even consider certain clothing if they think they’ll be too exposed,” says Jones. “Filling in the neckline with simple jewelry, a scarf or a tank won’t interfere with the garment, but it will help give the customer ideas and options.” And as with stuffing, don’t add so many layers that it takes a major effort to remove the accessories every time a customer wants to try on a sweater. “That’s just going to reduce [the sample’s] effectiveness as a selling tool,” says Bennett.

## Model Maintenance

The day-to-day operations of a yarn shop produce more than a fair share of dust and lint, so be sure to make time for regular cleanup. “Model garments need to be washed,” says Bennett, “even if no one is trying them on.” Jones agrees, noting that a lint roller is a stylist’s best friend. Give your display sweaters the once-over on a daily basis. “A dusty sweater is just sad,” says Bennett.

For hanging items, Bennett recommends taking garments down each night to let the yarn’s elasticity recover. “Sweaters stretch out of shape if you leave them hanging 24-7,” he says. “They need time to rest. Yes, it’s extra work, but the result will be a better-looking—and longer-lived—sweater.”

As with any display, swapping things out and changing them around

is key. Too many shop owners, Bennett says, hang on to samples that have long outlived their usefulness. “The sample may look great, but if you can’t support it, there’s no reason for it to be on your sales floor. You’re selling yarn, not finished sweaters. If you can no longer supply customers with the pattern or the yarn, what’s the point of displaying the garment?” Make room for newer items that will move your inventory.

Sample display options are endless, but not every one is right for every store or garment. Sometimes a sweater will look awful on a hanger but completely different on a form, says Bennett. If you don’t like the way it looks, try something else. Fold it, drape it, put it on the cash wrap. Or better yet, put it on your employees. “Knits are your business,” says Bennett. “There’s no better way to show them off.”

## Where’d You Find That?

Savvy shop owners find display pieces in lots of unexpected places—one confessed to Dumpster-diving behind a mall to salvage perfect-condition mannequins that had been discarded by a department store. Some are lucky enough to have woodworking friends or family who are willing to craft custom pieces. Flea markets and antiques shops are another rich source; also be on the lookout for clothing boutiques that are going out of business—you may be able to pick up quality display pieces at a fraction of the price.

Many retailers swear by eBay for both new and vintage pieces; search “head forms,” “mannequin” or “retail display” to find everything from elegant maple head forms and antique dressmaker dummies to retro baby dolls big enough to sport a sweater. The Internet is overflowing with sources for knitworthy hangers, mannequins and other display items. We’ve compiled a short list of yarn-retailer favorites below.

### Firefly Solutions

Formerly Robert H. Ham, supplier of fixtures, displays and merchandising options including dress forms.  
[www.robertham.com](http://www.robertham.com)

### Gershel Brothers

Great selection of hangers, mannequins, forms and other display items, both new and used. Regular closeout deals.  
[www.gershelbros.com](http://www.gershelbros.com)

### Henry Hanger

A great selection of wood, bamboo, and upscale acrylic and flocked hangers, mannequins and more.  
[www.henryhanger.com](http://www.henryhanger.com)

### Homegroan

Vintage wooden hat blocks.  
[www.homegroan.com](http://www.homegroan.com)

### Manne-King

Professional dress forms, mannequins, head forms, glove and sock forms.  
[www.manne-king.com](http://www.manne-king.com)


### Store Supply Warehouse

Reasonably priced wood hangers; head, hand and sock forms; dress forms; and mannequins of all types.  
[www.storesupply.com](http://www.storesupply.com)

### Wolf Form Company

The great-looking workhorse dress form adored by manufacturers, designers and fashion schools.  
[www.wolfform.com](http://www.wolfform.com)





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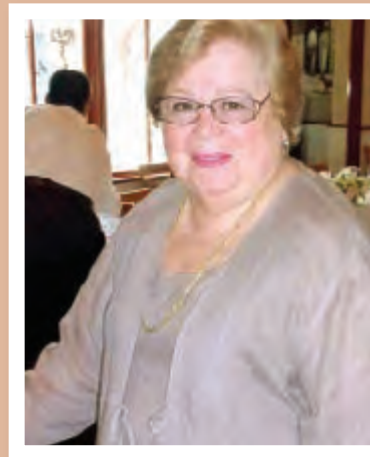
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# She's a Trendsetter

*Myrna Klein has worked in the needlearts industry for more than 40 years. In November, Trendsetter Yarns, the company she co-owns with her son Barry, celebrates its 25th anniversary. YMN's Erin Slonaker chatted with Klein about her start in the business and learned that after all these years, she's still addicted to needlework.*



**YMN: Were you raised in a crafty household? How did your love of needlearts develop?**

**MK:** Knitting was always a fascination for me. My mother was a fabulous knitter who also crocheted beaded handbags, gowns and bedcovers. Her hands were never quiet. She didn't teach me to knit, but she did instill in me a great desire to learn. Our next-door neighbor taught me well: She insisted that everything I did be done to perfection. I learned to crochet when I was 5 and started a granny-square blanket with lots of little squares—which I finished 20 years later, after Barry was born. I knit a prize-winning sweater when my kids were in grade school, and that inspired me to knit again. I made several coats for my daughter when she was little and used to pray for cold weather so she could wear them. Sadly, the temperatures [in southern California] never cooperated, and the coats were hardly used.

**YMN: What led you to start a needlearts company?**

**MK:** I was never the type of person who could sit still and do nothing. I decided to learn to needlepoint since it looked interesting; I figured I could make chair seats for the dining room (which I never did). The owner of our local needlepoint shop was the most unfriendly person to do business with. She wanted you to buy something and leave the store. Learning how to do different stitches was the consumer's job, not hers. I did meet some lovely ladies there who had the same desires as I did, so I bought a few instruction books; soon my home became "needlepoint central." They all brought their friends to my house for classes, and eventually I turned my living room and den into a small shop and classroom. When this overtook our family life, I told my husband I wanted to open a needlepoint shop. He thought I was crazy but indulged my desire, and in July 1972, Myrna's Place opened. The store was 900 square feet of beautiful canvases and needlepoint yarn. No knitting yet.

**YMN: At what point did you transition to knitting yarn, and why?**

**MK:** Four years after I opened Myrna's Place,

when all of my customers had covered their own lives with needlepoint, they approached me to add knitting to the shop. I expanded the store to 1,800 square feet and went searching for interesting knitting yarns. All I found were basics, basics, basics. It was very boring. How many afghans can you possibly make? And not everyone wanted fancy stitched sweaters. It was time for new beginnings, and I was determined to make it happen. I hired Barbara Johnson to come to my home to teach pattern making, and so our new beginning started again.

**YMN: Is that what led you to fashion yarns?**

**MK:** I wanted to produce yarns that showed off the garment and not the knitting technique. At that time, there was only one company in the U.S., Unger Yarns, that produced novelty yarn. I felt it was my time to make a mark. My business partner and I made a trip to Italy, researched manufacturers and started a new business called Fantacia. I made a product called Cin Cin, pronounced "chin chin," and it was the most copied product! People talk about that yarn to this day.

**YMN: Why Italy, in particular?**

**MK:** I had vowed that if I ever produced a product, it would be in Italy. I was in Florence for my surprise 40th-birthday celebration, and I felt like I was home.

**YMN: When did Barry join you in business?**

**MK:** The Fantacia partnership was severed after five years, and that's when Barry started working full-time with me in our new company, Trendsetter Yarns. Barry was literally raised at Myrna's Place. He'd come home from school and do his homework in the store. He loved playing with the inventory and was constantly rearranging it. My employee, Sylvia Cooper, who now owns her own yarn shop, A Major Knitwork in Van Nuys, taught him how to knit. She wasn't going to let him just sit and watch what we were doing; he had to do it too. Thus our designer was born.

My daughter Jeri helped out when I needed

her, but knitting was definitely not her calling, though she was once given an award for a Bargello piece she had done. That was the end of Jeri's life in the yarn business. She has given me two beautiful grandsons whose faces grace our instruction books, since they pose for us very willingly. Uncle Barry is their best friend.

**YMN: How do you split responsibilities at the company?**

**MK:** Barry is my right hand. In the beginning I worked at designing the yarn, picking colors and making business decisions. Barry did all the pattern designing, pattern writing and production supervising. He designed the booth for trade shows and readied each collection for our exhibits. Now he runs the whole show. I am semi-retired and take great pride in watching his talent bloom. His students adore him. He is such a natural.

**YMN: Trendsetter recently introduced mink yarn to the market. How has it been received? Do see bringing in other unique fibers?**

**MK:** Barry chose our mink yarn, and we are thrilled with the response. He is always looking for different ideas and products. They keep him inspired for great designing.

**YMN: What kind of projects do you like to knit? What's on your needles now?**

**MK:** I currently have a sweater designed by Laura Bryant of Prism on my needles. I am also needlepointing several pieces and have figured out that I have to live to 105 to finish all that I've started. That is if I don't buy another thing—and you know that is not happening.

**YMN: What changes have you seen the industry over the years?**

**MK:** I have been in the industry since 1972 and look with great pride at its growth. I served on the board of TNNA several times in the past and now watch as my son, who was president, makes things happen. He started The Great Wall of Yarn and writes the scripts for the fashion shows. I am a very proud lady.



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