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# Business Minded



## on our cover

### THANK YOU VERY MUCH, MR. ROBOTO

A helpful cardboard robot helps us wind some Manos del Uruguay Wool Clasica in a neon-bright shade. The mainstay yarn comes to life in new, on-trend colors in addition to the classics. Learn more in our Yarn Update (page 22). Distributed by Fairmount Fibers ([fairmountfibers.com](http://fairmountfibers.com)).

Photograph by Marcus Tullis

### ATOP OUR SMART COLUMNS

Colorful crochet hooks from Knitter's Pride let you know exactly what size you're using. [knitterspride.com](http://knitterspride.com)

One of my favorite weekends of the year is the one spent at the Yarn Market News Smart Business Conference. The name of the conference is long and solidly describes what it is, but let's be honest: It's a little boring. It doesn't get across just how fun and special this event actually is. When I tell people outside our industry why I'm unavailable that weekend, they give me a sympathetic look, for in their fields "professional development" is a tedious affair.

But in our case, that's not true at all. I'm quick to explain not only why I like going to the conference so much, but why it's so important to the industry. The atmosphere is warm, friendly and open, but it's educational and inspiring as well. We're there for serious work—the state of our economy is, after all, no laughing matter—but that doesn't mean we can't have some fun while we do it. Something that strikes me every year is how noncompetitive everyone is while they're together. People with shops in the same general area commiserate about a problem customer, a local law that affects their businesses, the vagaries of the recent weather. Those who are meeting for the first time set up regular phone calls to talk shop once they're back home. Owners who've been in business for decades regularly (and eagerly) share tips—handling vendors, for instance—with LYSOs who've been open for less than a year.

The serious work is spent in sessions, and this year we made a point of looking for speakers who know something about weathering a tough economy. Two incredibly useful sessions, "The ABC's of Cash Flow" and "How to Grow Your Business in Challenging Times," will provide ideas for handling slow times and taking control of your business. But it's not all doom and gloom—we also want attendees to stay current on fashion trends, learn how communication styles differ by personality type, and think about PR in the digital age. Though *Yarn Market News* works to bring you this kind of information regularly, there's nothing quite like the personal interaction that the conference can bring.

I hope to see you at the conference, scheduled for March 9–11 in Chicago; in the meantime, please enjoy this jam-packed issue. Many of the topics dovetail nicely with the ones you'll hear about at the conference, in fact—everything from budgeting and planning your cash flow (page 56) to creating online content that will reach the masses (page 38). Leslie Petrovski explores the world of yarn tourism (page 48), a growing segment of the industry, while Daryl Brower sticks close to home with advice on dealing with security issues at your shop (page 52). I'm particularly thrilled to present our celebrity interview with Barbara Kingsolver, who's not only a brilliant writer and avid knitter but the owner of a sheep farm as well.

Here's to 2014—may it be a lucrative one!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erin".

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



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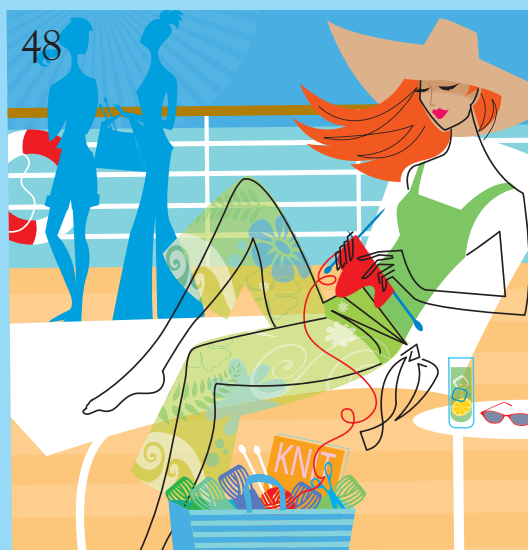
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**Dr. Lois P. Frankel**

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*.



**Mary Faktor**

Understanding the  
Personalities of Your  
Customers and Employees



**Paula Giovacchini**

How to Grow Your Business  
in Challenging Times



**Debi Lilly**

Making the Most  
of Your Space:  
Tips & Tricks



**Nancy Shenker**

Creating PR from  
Digital Media



**Cathy Wagner**

ABC's of Cash Flow



**David Wolfe**

Current and Upcoming  
Fashion and Color Trends

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The next issue of YMN will mail on April 9, 2014.



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## Knitting Abacus

What do you do when you've hurt your back and pain meds make you too groggy to count rows? If you're knitter **Sharon Coleman**, you invent a decorative bracelet that lets the wearer keep track of rows by counting beads. Coleman dubbed her invention the "Ablet"—"ab" from abacus, "let" from bracelet. It works like an abacus, with two columns of beads, one to keep track of the "ones" and the other to keep track of the "tens." As the knitter finishes a row, she moves a bead from one end of the Ablet to the other. The Ablet is designed so that beads slide at the touch of a finger but stay in place when the bracelet moves or is shaken. Coleman was insistent that the product be attractive enough to stand on its own as jewelry: "The Ablet went through several incarnations before I found a way to make it both functional and pretty enough to wear all the time, which is important if you are as forgetful as I am." Originally Coleman made all the Ablets herself, but she has since hired outside help. In fact, the product is so popular, she is looking to contract with a piecework company in Maine to meet increased demand. Coleman loves hearing about the many non-knitting uses

her customers devise for their Ablets: keeping score in golf, counting calories or how many glasses of water are drunk in a day, helping with medication or vitamin regimens or, as Coleman herself does, using it to keep track of the current date. The Ablet comes in more than a dozen styles, with various colors of beads and lacing; at press time, a leather steampunk version that will enable repeat and row counting at the same time was in the works. [knittingabacus.com](http://knittingabacus.com)



## NEW and KNITworthy

### Congratulations

to **Ellen Gormley**, who was recently named editor of **Crochet! Magazine**. A crochet designer, blogger and teacher, Gormley frequently appears on the PBS show *Knit and Crochet Now!* Her designs have been published in magazines including *Interweave Crochet*, *Crochet!* and *Crochet World*; she's also the author of two crochet books, with a third scheduled for publication next month. "It's a real honor and personal achievement to be coming on board," says Gormley, whose first issue as editor will be published in August. Gormley replaces Carol Alexander, who will serve as executive editor of the magazine.

**STITCHCRAFT**  
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**Leanne Pressly** announces a change for her company, the Wool Wide Web. To better serve her "multicraftual" clients, she has changed the company name to **Stitchcraft Marketing**. She'll continue to provide the same host of web-based services and marketing pro-

grams such as social media, brand development, pattern support programs and website design. "Our name reflects the consumer market we see now, one in which knitters [are passionate about] a variety of crafts—they're also quilters, spinners, jewelry makers," says Pressly. Find the team online at their new home, [stitchcraftmarketing.com](http://stitchcraftmarketing.com).

## Furloughed Freebie

When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade; when a Washington, D.C., budget impasse shuts down the federal government, you make some new knitters. That's exactly what the Alexandria, Virginia, shop **Fibre Space** did, offering free knitting classes weekdays from 1 to 5 P.M. for the duration of the two-week shutdown. "My husband works for the federal government," owner **Danielle Romanetti** explains, "so the shutdown hit close to home. This was one of the worst things to happen to the local economy in a long time. We wanted to give back to our community." She hosted as many as 75 beginning knitters during the shutdown. "One day we had to put up a folding table to handle the number of people," she adds. Students brought their own supplies or purchased kits at Fibre Space; by popular demand, the store began offering a way for customers unaffected by the shutdown to donate a kit to a furloughed federal employee.

Romanetti proudly tells of would-be knitters who came for the first day of class and stuck with it; "in a short time, they've gone way beyond the knit and purl stitches and are making great things like lace baby blankets." She's betting on the fact that today's students will become tomorrow's loyal customers. "We're confident that they'll be lifelong customers because they learned with us. Most people remember who taught them how to knit." Catch up with the latest happenings at Fibre Space at the shop's blog, [fibrespace.com/blog](http://fibrespace.com/blog).

## Whirling Dervishes

During **Spinning and Weaving Week** last October, spinners across the U.S. and Canada came together for the first-ever **Spinzilla**, an event sponsored by TNNA's Spinning and Weaving segment group to raise spinning's profile and bring the community together. At its heart, Spinzilla was a competition: Yarn shops mobilized their spinning customers by forming teams and hosting spin-ins each night of the week-long competition. Each spinner's total yardage contributed to the team's score.

"We had so much fun hosting a nightly spinning event. Everyone was so into it," says **Jaime Jennings**, co-owner of



Fancy Tiger Crafts in Denver, Colorado, who sponsored the winning team, which will enjoy bragging rights until next year's Spinzilla and who shared in the more than \$2,000 in prizes donated to the competition.

In the end, nearly 1.4 million yards of yarn were spun by the 28 teams, and more than \$6,000 was raised for TNNA's NeedleArts Mentoring Program. "Our mission is to share the joy of spinning and weaving," said **Dave Van Stralen** of Louet, chairman of the Spinning and Weaving Group. "This event made dollars and sense." A similar event for weaving may follow. Learn more at [spinzilla.com](http://spinzilla.com).



## Check Your Schedule

In an effort to better meet its retailers' needs, **Classic Elite Yarns** of Lowell, Massachusetts, decided to change its calendar. "We sat back and looked at the industry from a strategic perspective," recalls CEY owner and president **Betsy Perry**, "and we thought about how consumers were buying yarn, how retailers were buying yarn, and how we as a company were providing yarn and pattern support—and we realized they didn't mesh." For years, the yarn industry has followed a two-season approach to inventory and ordering: a strong fall/winter season and a lighter spring/summer season. LYSes preview each season's yarns by meeting with a sales rep or attending a trade show; most then place one sizeable order for the coming season. Increasingly, however, LYSes are looking to spread delivery of new inventory out over a wider time period, offering their customers new products more frequently.

After getting feedback from retailers, Classic Elite shifted to a twelve-month cycle for introducing new products and pattern support. Now the company debuts a new collectible pattern book, featuring 10 to 12 styles from their design staff and indie designers, each month. As Perry describes it, "Each book will be centered on a theme and will include several yarn choices; often a new yarn that is timely and seasonally appropriate will also be introduced." Thus instead of an avalanche of new products twice a year, LYSes will receive a constantly changing selection of yarns and patterns.

The program premiered last November with the release of *Chateau*, a bulky alpaca/bamboo blend; that month's book, *Portraits*, focused on quick-knitting sweaters (for colder weather) and stylish accessories (with holiday gift-giving in mind). Perry notes that a critical component of the program is tailoring each yarn introduction and pattern book for the month of its release; December, for example, focused on colorwork—a timely accompaniment to the bright holiday season—while January shifted focus to lighter yarns in preparation for upcoming warmer weather.

Perry acknowledges that Classic Elite's new program is a bit of a risk. "From a business perspective, it's a big shift. People are used to spending their [seasonal budgets] all at once, and we're transitioning to a system in which people need to save some for March instead of spending it all in January." The initial response, however, has been good, and CEY is making a real effort to expand its presence on the web in a way that will be useful to yarn shops. In addition to using social media, the company sends an e-newsletter to consumers offering free patterns; updates the CEY blog regularly; and has a retailer-only website (the "CEY Insider") to support LYSes, with videos, slide shows, information about yarns and photographs they can use to promote the CEY yarns and patterns they sell. [classiceliteyarns.com](http://classiceliteyarns.com)

## The **NEW** Virtual Experience

Industry stalwart **Tahki-Stacy Charles** believes yarn shops play an invaluable role in getting yarn into consumer hands and keeping consumers excited about new products. For that reason, **Stacy Charles** himself frequently visits TSC retailers to help showcase yarns and highlight fashion trends. "Trunk shows bring good crowds and the stores do a fair volume of business the day I'm there," Charles explains. "But I can't be everywhere," so he started looking for a way to provide more shops with in-store events to build enthusiasm for TSC yarns. Enter a new program called "The Stacy Charles Experience."

Retailers who are committed to the TSC line in terms of both volume and depth can schedule a special in-shop event featuring a trunk show of current garments, a yarn tasting for customers, and special video presentations. "We're known for our fashion photography and expertise," notes Charles. Building on that strength, the video includes a behind-the-scenes look at a runway show featuring TSC garments, including 360-degree views, and a segment in which

Charles outlines how new yarns play off the season's fashion trends. "It gives the retailer a well-rounded and exciting in-shop experience," he says, "and it allows me to be in shops even when I can't physically be there."

Another way that Tahki-Stacy Charles has been building its reach is by paying more attention to its Internet presence.

Although TSC's weekly e-newsletter goes directly to consumers, the company has made a strategic decision to avoid selling directly

to them. Last summer, the company added a special feature to its newsletter: a weekly, in-depth profile of a TSC retailer. A "Buy It Now" button is embedded in the profile; clicking on the button takes the reader to the store's e-commerce site, where readers can purchase TSC yarns and patterns, including those highlighted in the newsletter. (The features have also been good publicity for the profiled shops.) "We're not interested in selling directly to consumers," Charles emphasizes, "and we wanted to give more exposure to local shops through our newsletter." Learn more at [tahkistacycharles.com](http://tahkistacycharles.com).



## Store Exclusives

**Kelbourne Woolens**, U.S. distributors of **The Fibre Co.** yarns, has come up with yet another approach to reach out to retailers. Aware that yarn shops face especially keen competition when it comes to pattern sales, owners **Courtney Kelley** and **Kate Gagnon Osborn** offered a special line of LYS-only patterns from October through December 2013.

"We wanted to do something to incentivize shops to order yarn we had ample stock of," Kelley notes. Shops ordering 10 or more bags of the yarn featured each month received, for free, exclusive Kelbourne Woolens accessories patterns in pdf form, which could be printed at the shop and sold at full retail price. Focusing on smaller projects and gift items, Kelley points out, "makes it easy [for LYSes] to whip up a quick sample to display with the yarn." Kelley and Osborn even included an option for online shops, allowing them to embed the pdf and offer it for sale on their own websites or email it to customers who purchased yarn via the shops' e-commerce sites. Kelbourne Woolens promoted the patterns via their website, blog and social media, though consumers could purchase the patterns only from an LYS. Retailers responded so enthusiastically to the initiative that stocks of *Tundra*, the first yarn featured in the promotion, were quickly depleted. [kelbournewoolens.com](http://kelbournewoolens.com)



## Yarn Dancer

A skein winder, a plying device, a yardage measurer and a feeding mechanism, the **Yarn Dancer** is a unique multiuse machine designed by and for yarn crafters. The motorized device, which is making its debut at Vogue Knitting LIVE in New York in January, automates the winding and feeding processes: Turn hanks into cakes, ply two strands of yarn together or measure yardage as you knit. Knitters with a need for speed will find the feeding mechanism particularly intriguing: Press a foot pedal or adjust the speed of the motor and the Yarn Dancer automatically feeds yarn to you so you don't need to tug at the skein. **Nick Stevens** of InventionMarketing.co (the exclusive agent of the Yarn Dancer brand) explains, "The Yarn Dancer was invented by **Diana Toni**, an accomplished crafter dissatisfied with the amount of time and manual effort required to wind and pull yarn during the course of her projects. We've kept refining it, and it now incorporates so many processes that it's everything a crafter could want in a single machine." Visit [DianaToni.com](http://DianaToni.com) for details and wholesaling information.

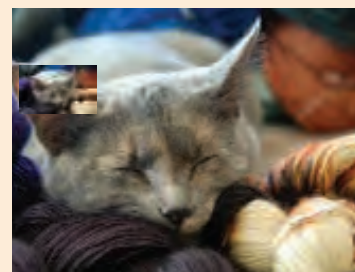
## Knit One, Purr Two



Hand-dyers aren't just creative when it comes to imagining color combinations for their yarns—they're also creative when it comes to finding ways to support their favorite causes. Canadian hand-dyer **Ancient Arts Fibre Crafts** recently introduced the Meow Yarn Collection, 17 color-

ways based on cat coat and eye colors, with a portion of the proceeds from the sale of each skein going to a Calgary cat rescue/adoption center. Owner **Caroline Sommerfeld** has a long history volunteering with the no-kill Meow Foundation, fostering cats, transporting animals, coordinating donations, even growing organic catnip for kitty treats. "After 12 years of fostering and heavy lifting," Sommerfeld says, "it was time for a change. One of the Meow Foundations' constant needs is fundraising." Sommerfeld approached the foundation with the idea of selling feline-themed yarn colorways; in just

the first six months of sales, Ancient Arts has raised well over \$3,000. "Knitters love the idea, they love the colors, they love that they can connect with their pets through yarn, and they love that they can aid a very important cause at the same time," observes Sommerfeld. At press time, the Meow Collection included 17 colorways, from smoky Blue Persian to Cat's Eye Gold, plus multi-colored options like Siamese (cream, tan and black) and Tuxedo Cat (black and white, of course). Interest in the Meow Yarn Collection has been so strong that Sommerfeld plans to add more colors and base yarns and, beginning in 2014, will donate money from the proceeds to U.S.-based charities in addition to the Canada-based Meow Foundation. [ancientartsfibre.com](http://ancientartsfibre.com)

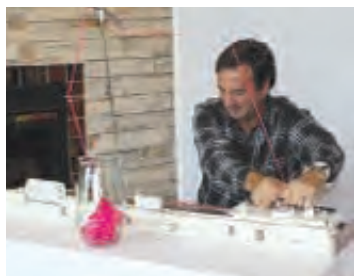


## Sending a Latte Love

Participating in last October's Breast Cancer Awareness Month was as easy as grabbing a cup of coffee—or simply using the right hashtag. **Caribou Coffee**, a national chain of premium coffeehouses, created its Amy's Blend program more than 18 years ago to honor its original "roastmaster," Amy Erickson, who lost her battle with breast cancer in 1995. Each fall, Caribou donates a portion of the proceeds from retail coffeehouse sales of special branded products to a national nonprofit called CancerCare. Mike Tattersfield, president/CEO of Caribou Coffee, notes, "Caribou is incredibly honored to share Amy Erickson's inspiring story with our communities through this program each year." CancerCare offers financial, emotional and practical

support to patients and their families.

This year, fueled by social media, Caribou added a knitting component to the Amy's Blend program. Each time the hashtag #CaribouKnits was used on Facebook or Twitter from September 28 through October 31, 2013, employees at the Caribou Coffee headquarters committed to machine-knitting one inch of a scarf, with the finished scarves being distributed by CancerCare to those impacted by breast cancer in Caribou communities. Knitwear designer, author and teacher **Annie Modesitt**, who lost a beloved cousin to breast cancer, was the official knit-blogger of the Caribou Knits campaign. Modesitt explains, "The thrust of Caribou Coffee's program is to provide warm scarves for women suffering from breast cancer. I know from my cousin's fight with the disease that feeling cold is a common complaint among these women. Forty uses of #CaribouKnits equals one scarf, which is the easiest knitting any of us will ever do." Modesitt also designed a special scarf pattern, the Twisted Float Side Knit Scarf, offered for free on her blog in the hope that readers will knit one (or more) to give to a friend fighting breast cancer. By the end of October 450 scarves had been knit, which means 18,000 tweets used the CaribouKnits hashtag during the month-long campaign. See more at [cariboucoffee.com](http://cariboucoffee.com) and [modeknit.com/](http://modeknit.com/) 2013/10/05/free-scarf-pattern.



## Shining Her Light

Hand-dyers **Nancy Leuer** and **Veronica Van** of **Dream in Color** were looking for a way to pay it forward. "We were at a point in the growth of our business when we were looking to do something to give back," says Leuer, "but we just couldn't find the right thing." Then Leuer and Van heard the story of Chelsea King, a beautiful and bright 17-year-old who was murdered by a convicted sex offender who had been released from prison.

Chelsea's parents, Kelly and Brent King, created Chelsea's Light, a non-profit foundation to work for positive change in their daughter's memory. Chelsea's Light provides scholarship funds for local students and is committed to seeing Chelsea's Law enacted throughout the country; the law would require a sentence of life without parole for sexual predators who commit heinous crimes against children. A friend of Kelly's approached Dream in Color, asking for yarn donations so that King could knit and crochet scarves to send to scholarship winners.

Leuer and Van were moved by Chelsea's story and decided that simply donating yarn wasn't enough. They decided to offer a shawl kit in Chelsea's honor, working with the Kings to try to capture Chelsea's spirit. Color selection was especially important. "Working with Chelsea's mom, we looked at pictures of Chelsea showing off her eclectic taste with colorful scarves." The dyers decided on a two-skein combination featuring sky blue, tangerine orange and sunflower yellow—three of Chelsea's favorites—hand-dyed in

the company's popular Smooshy sock yarn. Designer **Stephen West** allowed Dream in Color to use his pattern *Akimbo* (shown left) in the kit. Dream in Color pledged to donate \$10 to Chelsea's Light for each kit sold; a few yarn shops offered their own monetary contributions to the foundation as well. The kits, which retailed for \$48 each, sold out quickly; as of press time, more than 500 had been sold, netting the Chelsea's Light Foundation more than \$5,000. Learn more about the foundation at [chelseaslight.org](http://chelseaslight.org).



## It's a Wrap(ture)

If you took a shine to Wrapture wool wash, introduced last year by **Eucalan** in partnership with designer **Kristin Omdahl**, you'll be delighted to hear about an addition to the line. Last August, Wrapture Fragrant Balm was introduced at the Curve Lingerie Expos in New York and Las Vegas. The balm has the same jasmine fragrance as the wool wash, but it comes in solid form. Omdahl explains, "Essential oils have been my perfume of choice for years, but oils are difficult to carry in your purse and are especially difficult for travel. I love carrying Wrapture balm with me. My favorite use is to dab it on my pulse points and behind my ears for a subtle pick-me-up." Wrapture

Fragrant Balm is all-natural and vegan and contains no alcohol, preservatives, colors or petroleum. The versatile balm can be used not only as a fragrance but to moisturize rough skin and cuticles, and it may be especially helpful for those with sensitivities to artificial fragrances and other substances in traditional cologne sprays. [eucalan.com/wrapture](http://eucalan.com/wrapture)



## In Memoriam: Kay ten Kraft (1951–2013)



The industry lost a talented fiber artist last June when **Kay ten Kraft** died suddenly near her home in Cherry Plain, New York. Kay was proprietor of **Sliver Moon Farm**, a family-run business offering fiber, yarn and batts. Kay was known for her exquisite hand-dyeing, was an avid knitter and was loved by many on the craft-show circuit in the northeastern U.S. Kay's husband and partner Nick Adams will continue Sliver Moon Farm in her honor, assisted by Kay's daughter Becca

Brody, who shared this description of Kay: "My mother was a force of nature: outgoing, generous, and eager to share her love of all things knitting and fiber-related. On one of our last visits, she pulled me into her dye studio to see how a light-green powdered dye resulted in a bright red yarn. To my mother, the world was a constant source of wonder, and I think it was that quality that enabled her to be such an effective teacher and mentor in the knitting community." [slivermoonfarm.squarespace.com](http://slivermoonfarm.squarespace.com)



## Buyin' Some Bison

**Ron** and **Theresa Miskin** of **Buffalo Wool Company** have turned bison into a business—and a thriving business it is, offering yarn, hats, gloves, socks and more, all made from supersoft bison down. Now they're planning on bringing the bison to you, in a customized van—a mobile bison delivery unit. The Miskins frequently travel the country attending fiber shows, but shows only reach a certain number of customers and often require vending fees. The Miskins also like to visit local guilds, which may not be located near big fiber shows or even near big cities. When they had a chance to purchase an industrial van, the Miskins decided the time was right to take their show on the road. Crowdfunding helped them purchase the van and retrofit it with shelves, lighting and other comfortable touches (including foldaway sleeping quarters). "It looks like a yarn shop on the inside," Ron Miskin says, "a very small and narrow yarn shop." The Miskins plan to celebrate the grand unveiling of Miss Betsy, as the truck has been dubbed, in early 2014.

One option Ron Miskin is especially excited about is their ability to dye yarn wherever the van stops. "We have little roll-out carts and turkey roasters, along with a generator to help us dye," he says. "Customers can pick their own colors, and we can dye them on site." The Miskins plan to schedule events with local guilds, LYSes and maker fairs, offering demonstrations—"we do a kind of show-and-tell about bison products," he explains—along with sales. "The van will allow us to get to places we might not normally get to and to talk with people who are making all kinds of wonderful things," Miskin says. "Making yarn is one thing, but what's really cool is seeing someone create something beautiful with your yarn." [thebuffalowoolco.com](http://thebuffalowoolco.com)



# An Olympic Feat

*In February at the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, the yarn industry will share the stage with the athletes during the Opening Ceremony in the form of the official Ralph Lauren-designed sweater worn by American Olympians. What's the connection between the designer and the hand-knitting industry? The yarn for the sweaters came directly from the ranch of Dan and Jeanne Carver, owners of Oregon's Imperial Stock Ranch and Imperial Yarn, and was spun at Kraemer Yarns in Pennsylvania. Erin Slonaker spoke with Jeanne about the company's Olympic endeavor.*



## ES: How did this partnership come about?

**JC:** I got a call from a man asking me about our yarns—he told me he was with product development at Ralph Lauren. I had thought he was a local yarn shop owner, but he assured me he was on Madison Avenue in New York. I told him that I was sitting outside in the Oregon desert and asked him if he could hear my sheep. I held up the phone and let him listen.

I told him about our ranch and its history, and that night I put together an information packet. I never believed anything would come of it. About a month later, though, he called to set up a meeting between us and their design team. We gave them a tour of the ranch and shared our life with them. I guess we won them over, because five months later we got the order from Ralph Lauren.

## ES: How did they tell you what they were using the yarn for?

**JC:** We had to sign a confidentiality agreement before we could know how our yarn was being used! When the designer told us it was being used for the Opening Ceremony sweater—well, I can't think of anything bigger than that.

## ES: How much of the coordination did you handle?

**JC:** We shepherded the entire process, from moving the wool through to spinning the yarn to meeting/managing the color development to the specifications Ralph Lauren provided. There are nine colors in the Opening Ceremony sweater, and for each lot that we dyed, we sent a reeling for approval before sending it along to the knitting factory.

## ES: Did they use one of your existing yarns, or did you make a new one?

**JC:** They chose our Erin yarn, which is a worsted-spun 3-ply worsted weight. This was great for us and for Ralph Lauren because we knew the yarn well and could be confident in it when we sent it out to be spun. This means that while you're watching the Opening Ceremony, you can be working with the same yarn used in the clothing the American athletes are wearing. We're doing a knit-along during the Games using Erin to promote the yarn further and to support Team USA—the pattern is a unisex V-neck pullover by Tanis Gray. If people are looking to knit something before the Games, an American flag mitten pattern knit in Erin, also designed by Tanis Gray and published originally in her book *Knit Local*, is available online now [at [store.vogueknitting.com/p-2666-sousas-mitts.aspx](http://store.vogueknitting.com/p-2666-sousas-mitts.aspx)].

## ES: Is the actual Olympic sweater available, too?

**JC:** Aside from the hundreds of sweaters made for the athletes, Ralph Lauren did a limited-edition run of 300 of the sweaters to sell, which will be available in the week or so before the Opening Ceremony. There is currently no plan to make the pattern available; it was designed by Ralph Lauren's design team.

I'm excited that I was able to get one of the 300 sweaters, and Dan and I are putting it up for auction at a fundraiser to benefit the Oregon Agricultural Education Foundation. This group works toward the education and promotion of Oregon agricultural products, which of course means a lot to us. We're hoping it will raise tens of thousands of dollars.

## ES: What was it like working with Ralph Lauren's team?

**JC:** Every single person that I worked with at the company was incredible. They provided all the support I needed every step of the way, never behaving like a corporation. Any time we faced a challenge, they reached out a hand to help—which in turn brought our company up to a whole new level.

## ES: What does it mean to you and your staff to have had a hand in the sweater that will walk in the Opening Ceremony?

**JC:** We're very honored and humbled to be a part of it. Everybody associated with Imperial Stock Ranch—our family and friends—shares in this victory. We all feel connected to the story, to being part of Made in America for Team USA. But we're just one small part, one garment. Ralph Lauren worked with 40 different companies to produce the apparel. Think of all the people involved in our part alone—those who handle growing, processing, dyeing, delivery, knitting and more—and multiply that by the 40 companies involved. Ralph Lauren just made all of us a part of the story, and we're so honored. We feel so much emotion, so much pride and gratitude. We also know that it's not about us. It's about the Olympics. It's great for all of the small businesses involved, but we can't lose sight that it's all about supporting our athletes. They're the real stars here.

## ES: What do you hope it means for the future?

**JC:** I think it's really good news for the future: Ralph Lauren says the company will try to carry the Made in America brand after the Olympics. If they can do that, and help lead other apparel companies in doing that, it will be such a win for all of us. Small family-owned businesses are involved in this project, and Ralph Lauren is now shining a light on their efforts.

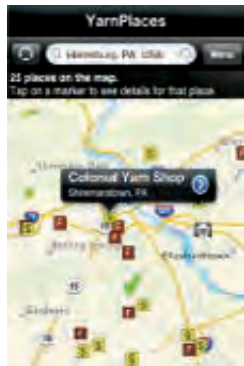
As for Imperial Stock Ranch, even before the call from Ralph Lauren, we'd been hearing from companies wanting to use our yarns for apparel. Knowing what that would challenge us to do for our business, I applied for a grant from the USDA, which we were awarded in June; it allows us to enter the apparel market. As a part of this grant we will be launching our own apparel line, the Imperial Collection by Anna Cohen, in Fall 2014.



**Watch a video about Imperial Stock Ranch's partnership with Ralph Lauren at <http://tinyurl.com/kqsmv4>. Learn more about Imperial Yarn at [www.imperialyarn.com](http://www.imperialyarn.com).**

## There's Always Room in the Trunk

Some say the journey is more important than the arrival—and that's definitely true if you stop at all the yarn shops along the way. Take advantage of these online re-



sources to ensure that your journeys are always filled with yarny goodness.

Start with Ravelry's new **Road Trip Planner**. Registered users of the free website can fill in the city and state they are leaving from and traveling to, along with the maximum number of miles they are willing to detour. One click, then presto: a handy list of yarn shops

along the way (with helpful info like address, number of miles off the original route and a link to each shop's Ravelry listing). The Road Trip Planner is accessed from the "Yarns" page (look for the car icon on the left-hand side) or visit [ravelry.com/roadtrip](http://ravelry.com/roadtrip).

**Knitmap.com** is a searchable database of knitting shops all over the world. Enter the location (address, city or zip code) and a map pops up, with pins marking the location of nearby LYSes. Click on the shop name to get its address, phone number and ratings/reviews; no sign-up is necessary. Register for a free account to contribute yarn shop information and reviews.

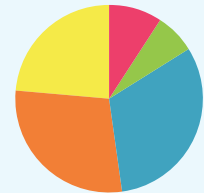
**Yarnplaces.com** (see photos above) provides information about shops, fiber events, mills and farms—even yarn bombings. Enter a zip code into a category and see a map with nearby locations marked. Or download the app (\$2.99, Android and iPhone) and use your smartphone or tablet to find nearby shops when you're on the road.

## Survey Results

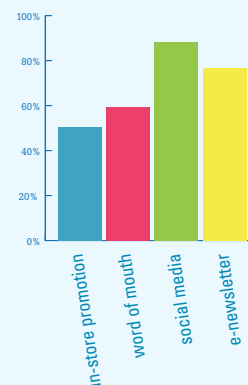
In May we asked you how you keep things fresh in the store, specifically new yarn.

How often do you introduce new yarns?

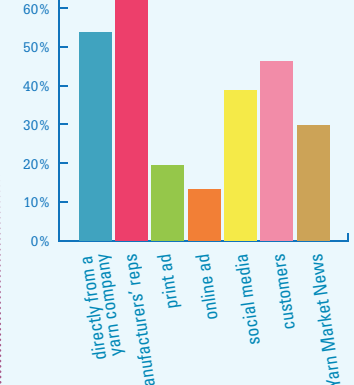
■ weekly  
■ every 2 weeks  
■ monthly  
■ quarterly  
■ other, including as they are received



How do you publicize new yarns?

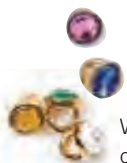


Primarily, how do you learn about new yarns?



## Getting Cre8tive

Need some crafting mojo before you're ready to start a new project—or finish an old one? A new website, **Cre8time.org**, may be just the ticket. Created by the nonprofit trade organization **Craft & Hobby Association**, Cre8time is designed as a social hub for makers of all types who want to reclaim their creativity. Cre8time's mission statement explains: "As our lives become increasingly crowded with 'responsibilities,' we tend to ignore ourselves and find it difficult to justify creative pursuits; they seem 'selfish' and are often the first things we discard." Cre8time's goal is "to help people recover eight hours a month and devote it to their particular craft and to create a place for them to share their experiences—the joys, lessons and results—with the creative community at large." Register for free and you can join a Cre8time team to share your projects, brainstorm through challenges or just get some encouragement—or create your own team to showcase your particular interests. More information is available at [cre8time.org](http://cre8time.org).

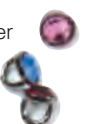


## Crystal Blue (Green, Red, Purple) Persuasion

Whether you're a knitter, a crocheter or a beader, you'll want to check out the new line of products from Horsman Ltd. **Crystaletts**, crystals set in metallic bezels with an attached ring shank, allow you to add a sparkle to your projects in much the same way you'd use beads. But unlike beads or regular crystals, these "buttons" don't have rough edges that can cut through fibers, and they have a crystal facing to only one side. Because they are faceted, they have extra shine, "like a jewel," says **Dorinda Balanecki**, creative director. Balanecki points out another advantage: "Traditional beads can distort the stitches and show on both the front and back of the work. Crystaletts buttons lay completely on the front side of the work, so they generally aren't seen from the back, and they don't leave you with a cold feeling against your skin." The tiny jewels come in two sizes (3mm and 5mm), with

14 crystal colors and four metal colors, for a whopping 42 color combinations.

While you're knitting, try Crystaletts Pins, fine-gauge safety pins with a larger-than-typical loop that are a handy way to mark stitches. Each pack contains two pins with the same color crystal (eight colors in all); pins fit up to size U.S. 13 needles. The company's Tag-a-Stitch markers—small disks with common knitting abbreviations written on them (eight blank ones are included too so crafters can personalize them)—are also extremely popular with knitters: Slip the tags onto the Crystaletts Pins and you've got an instant message to yourself. If you stop knitting partway across a row, adding a Tag-a-Stitch marker will tell you where in the pattern you left off, so you don't have to spend time deciphering which row or stitch comes next. Visit [crystaletts.com](http://crystaletts.com) for more information.





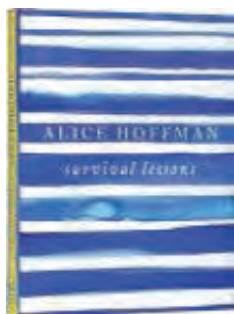
## (Knitter's) Pride and Joy



When **Knitter's Pride** introduced their Karbonz needles in 2012, the positive response from knitters was so enthusiastic, the company quickly expanded the line, adding more size options and an interchangeable set of Karbonz needles. **Shirish Jain** of Knitter's Pride credits the "tremendous" response to several factors, including the characteristics of the needles' carbon fiber. "Carbon fiber provides both strength and resilience, while other materials usually provide one of those qualities over the other. Our Karbonz needles are lightweight, flexible and warm to the touch, but the carbon fiber renders them virtually unbreakable."

Another advantage of the Karbonz needles is the brass tip—smooth and sharp. "Our product development team burned a fairly good amount of midnight oil to come up with this design," Jain adds. "It was a challenge to match the two materials, which are so different." Indeed, the first version of the Karbonz needles was made completely of carbon fiber, but as Jain explains, "it just didn't transcend the barrier from being good to great." A decision was then made to focus on the points, which ultimately led to the brass tips.

Like all Knitter's Pride needles, the Karbonz line was tested by knitters in the United States and Europe before their release. Interchangeable sets come in three sizes, each with a different price point and number of shafts; for example, the starter set includes five pairs of tips (U.S. sizes 2.5 through 6), two cables (24- and 32-inch lengths), end caps and a key for tightening the join, along with ID tags and a zippered case (MRSP \$64.99). Additional needle tips and cords are available separately. [knitterspride.com](http://knitterspride.com)



## Survival Lessons

Author **Alice Hoffman** has spent more than forty years writing—she's published twenty-one novels, three kids' books and two story collections, and last October her first nonfiction work, *Survival Lessons*, was published by Algonquin Books. In the book, Hoffman credits knitting with helping her understand failure, unwinding and starting anew: "All writers should be made to knit a hat before they start writing a novel. It would help with understanding the importance of revision, and that the process is what can bring you the most joy." Hoffman includes a hat pattern created by her cousin, knitwear designer **Lisa Hoffman**.

Lisa Hoffman has been knitting for many years, but this was her first foray into traditional publishing. "I was so excited when Alice brought up the idea, but I was also worried because she has so many loyal readers. I hope they enjoy this pattern alongside her wonderful words." Lisa designed the hat to be easy enough for a beginning knitter; more advanced knitters will be able to riff on the design by adding stripes or embellishment or changing up the yarn. "On the Survival Lessons Facebook page, Alice asked readers to share their own stories of healing and survival," she says. "It is so interesting to see how people are responding to the book and to each other as they share their stories."

Although Lisa is a knitting instructor, she didn't teach her cousin how to knit ("I helped a little at the beginning," she says). Now the cousins often knit when they get together. View a trailer for the book (with music contributed by Lisa Hoffman's son Aaron) at [youtube.com/watch?v=vaWR5vmK2ts](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaWR5vmK2ts) and check out both Hoffmans on Snappguide: [snappguide.com/alice-hoffman](http://snappguide.com/alice-hoffman).

## Yarn Under Glass

Preserve tradition—and your precious skeins—with the **Yarn Jar**, a handy new product from **The Lancaster Yarn Shop** that seems entirely on-trend, as the jar, if Pinterest is any indication, is the go-to vessel for just about everything these days. Made of heavy glass with a farmhouse feel, Yarn Jars are a modern yet old-school way to solve the problem of wandering skeins. Pop your yarn inside the heavy glass jar and thread the loose end through the grommets hole in the lid. The yarn flows smoothly as you stitch and stays clean and tidy. Lancaster owner **Wendy Ellis** found inspiration for Yarn Jars after discovering a vintage knitter's tin with a similar grommet in the top.

"We had been thinking about yarn and jars for quite a while. We've used jars in our displays, and our location in Pennsylvania's Amish country and the deep local tradition of preserving and canning made it a natural fit." Ellis found a local supplier to make the

jars exclusively for her shop, adding the shop name and a horse-and-buggy motif to underscore the shop's connection to Amish country. Response has been enthusiastic; as Ellis notes, "people really do like taking home something only available here." In the meantime, Ellis and her employees are having fun filling the jars with other items like buttons and tiny pieces of modular knitting for creative shop displays. Find out more at [lancasteryarnshop.com/blog/2013/8/12/you-saw-it-here-first](http://lancasteryarnshop.com/blog/2013/8/12/you-saw-it-here-first).



## YMN CALENDAR

Events to keep you in stitches this winter and spring.  
(For more, visit [www.yarnmarketnews.com](http://www.yarnmarketnews.com).)

**January 11–13**

### TNNA Winter Trade Show

San Diego Convention Center  
San Diego, California  
[tnna.org](http://tnna.org)

**January 17–19**

### Vogue Knitting LIVE!

New York Marriot Marquis  
New York, New York  
[vogueknittinglive.com](http://vogueknittinglive.com)

**February 1**

### Knit Michigan

Academy of the Sacred Heart  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan  
[knitmichigan.org](http://knitmichigan.org)

**February 13–16**

### Madrona Fiber Arts Winter Retreat

Hotel Murano  
Tacoma, Washington  
[madronafiberarts.com](http://madronafiberarts.com)

**February 15–16**

### TNNA Nashville Needlework Market

Nashville South Cool Springs  
Franklin, Tennessee  
[tnna.org](http://tnna.org)

**February 20–23**

### Stitches West

Santa Clara Convention Center  
Santa Clara, California  
[knittinguniverse.com/west](http://knittinguniverse.com/west)

**February 27–March 2**

### Rose City Yarn Crawl

Portland, Oregon  
[rosecityyarncrawl.com](http://rosecityyarncrawl.com)

**February 28–March 2**

### New England Textile Arts Network's SPA Knit & Spin

Hilton Garden Inn  
Freeport, Maine  
[netafiberforum.blogspot.com](http://netafiberforum.blogspot.com)

**March 9–11**

### Yarn Market News Smart Business Conference

Omni Chicago Hotel  
Chicago, Illinois  
[yarnmarketnews.com](http://yarnmarketnews.com)

**March 14–16**

### Vogue Knitting LIVE!

Meydenbauer Center  
Bellevue, Washington  
[vogueknittinglive.com](http://vogueknittinglive.com)

**March 14–16**

### Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet Festival

Four Points Sheraton  
Mars, Pennsylvania  
[pghknitandcrochet.com](http://pghknitandcrochet.com)

**March 21–22**

### Fibreswest

Cloverdale Exhibition Park Grounds  
Cloverdale, British Columbia  
[fibreswest.com](http://fibreswest.com)

**March 28–30**

### Dallas–Fort Worth Fiber Fest

Irving Convention Center  
Irving, Texas  
[dfwfiberfest.org](http://dfwfiberfest.org)

**April 10–13**

### Stitches South

Renaissance Waverly Hotel &  
Cobb Galleria Conference Center  
Atlanta, Georgia  
[knittinguniverse.com/south](http://knittinguniverse.com/south)

**April 11–12**

### Smoky Mountain Fiber Arts Festival

Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center

Townsend, Tennessee  
[smokymountains.org](http://smokymountains.org)

**April 25–26**

### Creativ Festival

International Centre  
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada  
[csnf.com](http://csnf.com)

**April 26–27**

### Downtown Knit Collective Knitters' Frolic

Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
[downtownknitcollective.ca](http://downtownknitcollective.ca)

**May 3–4**

### Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival

Howard County Fairgrounds  
West Friendship, Maryland  
[sheepandwool.org](http://sheepandwool.org)

**May 3–5**

### TNNA Summer Trade Show

Indianapolis Convention Center  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
[tnna.org](http://tnna.org)



## KNITS IN BLOOM

**Knit, Purl, Sow**, an exhibit at the **Brooklyn Botanic Garden**, featured a different kind of fiber: botanically correct knitted plants, magnificently oversized, hanging from the ceiling and mounted on the wall in the Conservatory Gallery. The artists—**Tatyana Yanishevsky**, **Ruth Marshall** and **Santiago Venegas**—work with needles and yarn to explore the relationship between textiles and their environment. In conjunction with the display, the Botanic Garden offered classes on knitting simple shawls, knitting with no needles and crocheting flowers. Learn more about the show at [bbg.org/discover/gallery/knit\\_purl\\_sow](http://bbg.org/discover/gallery/knit_purl_sow).

## Yarn Pet/Duo™



Yarn Pet™  
ball holders

for tangle  
and tug-free  
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## Motorized Ball Winders

- Saves time/money
- Will not break yarn
- Addicting!
- Spend more time with your customers
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800-731-5648

# Book Reviews

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

## Stitch Mountain

By Laura Zander

Sixth&Spring Books; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1936096671

Whether you're a winter-sports



fanatic or prefer to sit in front of a fire cozily knitting, you'll delight in *Stitch*

*Mountain*,

a collection inspired by the chic knits worn by world-class skiers and snowboarders. Start with the essays on the nexus between winter sports and knitting, then explore the terrific selection of patterns featuring cables, stranded knitting, slip stitches and more, all knit in Rowan and Red Heart yarns. Each pattern pays homage to the athlete who inspired it, from household names like Picabo Street to X-Games stars like Jayson Hale. And the list of contributing designers is just as impressive—Marie Wallin, Sally Melville and Edie Eckman among them. Appealing accessories, such as Gwen Bortner's double-knit cowl, Stephannie Tallent's flip-top mittens and Rachel Roden's pinstripe twisted-stitch mitts, give a gold-medal performance; don't miss Martin Storey's tour de force sweater with jumping skiers and star motifs. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the book benefits the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Foundation—quite apropos in this Winter Olympics year.

## Huge & Huggable Mochimochi

By Anna Hrachovec

Potter Craft; \$21.99

ISBN: 978-0385344579



Hrachovec is best known for knitting tiny things—her mochimochi patterns feature whimsical creatures knit in miniature form, and her breathtakingly detailed installations build entire worlds on a tabletop. But her fourth book is mochimochi writ and knit large. Jumbo-sized critters

like dinosaurs, birds and bears are just the beginning. How about a family of capybara, a row of knitted skyscrapers or a giant stuffed Number 2 pencil? Hrachovec manages to expand the size of her designs while maintaining an awe-inspiring level of detail, whether it's the sesame seeds on a hamburger bun (lettuce, cheese and tomato accompany the patty) or tricolored striped toothpaste. And who wouldn't want a knitted piñata (with room for candy) or a non-caloric slice of knitted cake at her next birthday party?

## The Knit Stitch Pattern Handbook

By Melissa Leapman

Potter Craft; \$22.99

ISBN: 978-0449819906

## 150 Scandinavian Motifs

By Mary Jane Mucklestone

Interweave Press; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1596688551

## Stitches for Tailored Knits

By Jean Frost

XXR, Inc.; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1933064277

Lovers of stitch dictionaries, rejoice: Three excellent options just hit the shelves, each with a different spin on stitch indexing. In *The Knit Stitch Pattern Handbook*, the prolific Melissa Leapman presents 300 stitch patterns divided into technique-based sections. Each



stitch appears in written and charted form and is accompanied by a clearly photographed swatch. Introductory pages discuss selecting patterns, increasing and decreasing in pattern, and designing with stitch patterns; instructions for chart reading and how-tos are perfect for newbies.

Meanwhile, Mary Jane Mucklestone follows up her 2011 primer on Fair Isle stitches with *150 Scandinavian Motifs*, a collection of stranded design elements—reindeer, stars, geometric bands



and more—collected from the traditional knitting of Norway, Sweden and other Northern European countries. Each motif is shown as a black-and-white chart, a color chart and in knitted swatch form. Four bonus projects—pincushion, mittens, hat and cowl—give knitters a chance to try a few motifs and inspire them to incorporate these lovely patterns into their own projects.

In *Stitches for Tailored Knits*, Jean Frost explores the nature of knitted fabric, focusing on those stitch patterns especially suited for her trademark tailored garments.



She groups stitch patterns based on the type of woven material they approximate—hound's tooth, basket-weave, quilted and more. Thoughtful touches include photographs that show the reverse side of each pattern as well as large closeups; mock-ups of a tailored jacket using each pattern; and alternatives for swatches that show single- and multicolor variations. Although designed to accompany Frost's pattern books, this carefully curated manual stands well on its own.

## The Yarn Whisperer

By Clara Parkes

Stewart, Tabori & Chang; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1617690020

Parkes is known for her information-packed weekly online magazine *Knitter's Review* and for her topnotch books on the structure and characteristics of yarn. But even readers used to Parkes's elegant prose may find themselves marveling at exactly how wonderful and evocative a writer she is.



*The Yarn*

*Whisperer* is a memoir of sorts, in which Parkes shares vignettes from her past, muses on the choices she's made, and offers insights about life—intermingling the metaphorical fabric of her world with the knitted fabric of her work. This charming volume is sure to elicit knowing smiles, nods of recognition, perhaps even a surreptitious tear, even from those hardened souls who avoid anecdotal knit-lit. Fiber folks will want to snap up multiple copies: one to keep on the bedside table, one to slip in the knitting bag and several to share with cherished knitting friends.

## Easy Knitting for Baby

By Doreen L. Marquart

Martingale & Co.; \$18.99

ISBN: 978-1604682298

Marquart presents a collection of 14 projects for babies in this sequel to 2011's *Grammy's Favorite Knits for Baby*. Like its predecessor, *Easy Knitting* aims for the knitting-grandmother demographic, ever-ready to shower new family members with knitted love. Wrap that cherished grandbaby in the hexagonal Garden Blanket; keep toes and ears warm with booties and caps; nestle a wee one in a sleep sack with optional car-seat-buckle opening. Marquart remembers



all the special occasions that fill Nana's scrapbook: a lacy gown and cap for baby's baptism and a cheerful stocking for the holiday season. Clear photographs and good-sized type make patterns easy to read, while DK- and worsted-weight yarns will speed knitting along.

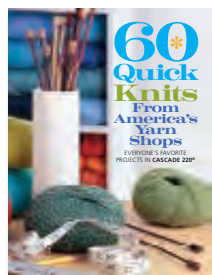
## 60 Quick Knits From America's Yarn Shops

Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95

ISBN: 978-1936096602

Yarn shop owners are the boots on the ground when it comes to picking projects that their customers will love. Small wonder then that the editors appealed to LYS owners and their staffs for

fast-knitting patterns in this latest volume in the popular *60 Quick Knits* series. The requisite number of offerings are all worked in versatile worsted-weight Cascade



220 and Cascade 220 Superwash yarns in every color of the rainbow. Capelets and cowls,

baby jackets and caps, mittens, scarves, shawls and hats of all types—the diversity of the offerings reflects the diversity and talent of today's LYS personnel. The patterns span all skill levels and include choices for every member of the family. And since all of the patterns feature Cascade's workhorse worsted-weight yarns, there's no need to worry about those pesky substitution questions—just cast on and knit!

**Hitch: Patterns Inspired by the Films of Alfred Hitchcock**  
Edited by Stephannie Tallent  
Cooperative Press: \$16.95  
ISBN: 978-1937513276

Alfred Hitchcock's movies are widely considered masterpieces, and fans of fashion find the couture clothing and vintage style just as transfixing as the twisting and twisted plots. Tallent, author



of *California Revival Knits*, curates a collection of handknits inspired by Hitchcock's films and

characters called, appropriately enough, *Hitch*. It sounds like a somewhat offbeat premise for a knitting pattern collection, but *Hitch* manages to capture the '50s vibe and noir feel made famous by the master filmmaker and his frequent costume designer, Edith Head. Heather Ordovery's cabled socks evoke the key evidence of *The Rope*, Christina Wall's Robie sweater riffs on a

# The ART of Doing Business

**People Love You: The Real-Life Secret to Delivering Legendary Customer Experiences**

By Jeb Blount (Wiley; \$21.95)  
ISBN: 978-1118433249

It's become a truism that bricks-and-mortar businesses need to excel at customer service to survive in today's market. In this book, consultant and author Jeb Blount crafts an entire program for developing better relationships with cus-



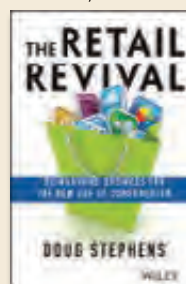
tomers. His premise is that a customer's experience with a retailer or brand is extraordinarily influential, and that creating "legendary" customer service is the key to the future of one's business. These are hardly earth-shattering ideas, but Blount backs up his theories with a

series of insights and practical steps that will inspire you to start implementing his ideas about the topnotch customer experience pronto. He begins by reminding retailers of seven "essential principles" of consumer behavior (e.g., customers act on emotion, then justify their decisions with logic), following up with an introduction to the five "levers" of customer experience ("connect," "build trust," "solve problems," etc.). Each lever is expanded in subsequent chapters with anecdotes and advice. The practical applications are a boon to retailers: Use the checklists of specific things retailers and their employees can do to improve the customer experience, and be sure to read the section devoted to dealing with what he calls "pissed-off customers."

**The Retail Revival: Reimagining Business for the New Age of Consumerism**

By Doug Stephens (Wiley; \$24.95)  
ISBN: 978-1118489673

It's always a little risky to try to read the retail world's tea leaves, but if anyone's going to successfully predict the future of the marketplace, Doug Stephens has a good shot at it. Stephens describes himself as a "futurist," and he has made his living advising high-profile retailers including Disney and Home Depot on how retail is evolving. In his debut book, Stephens theorizes that we are on the cusp of



a "new age of consumerism" that follows a period of turbulent change. Like many prognosticators, Stephens first looks back to see how we've gotten to where we are today, touching on brand establishment and development as a trend, the changing role of the middle class and its effect on retail, and the evolution of advertising through the Internet age. His conclusion? "Radical change is indeed real and happening, and...it will, at some point, touch your business." Stephens's hope for the future isn't as ominous, thankfully; he posits that an era of mindless consumption is giving way to a retail revival, where good companies will succeed, customers will enjoy pleasurable interactions with retailers, and motivated and talented retailers will find a niche that affords them a "gainful" living. Stephens's prescription for retailers is a blend of pep talk and reality testing, alternately predicting how the retail landscape will evolve, then providing advice on how to change one's business in response. Read this one for the big picture rather than the nitty-gritty.

**Retail Truths: The Unconventional Wisdom of Retailing**

By Chip Averwater (Hal Leonard; \$19.95)  
ISBN: 978-0983979074

A retail owner is usually so busy running her business that reading up on, well, how to run her business never makes it to the top of the to-do list. Chip Averwater's paperback book *Retail Truths* makes it easy for even a frantic business owner to take in nuggets of knowledge one at a time. Averwater's mini-lessons,



427 in all, are no more than a page in length and include observations, advice, mistakes to avoid and tips and tricks, frequently accompanied by real-life examples. Lessons are organized into chapters, covering meat-and-potatoes topics like inventory, accounting and profit, as well as less-typical topics such as firing, design and display, and running multiple stores. Some of the lessons are bound to sound familiar (how many times have you been told to "pay yourself"?), while others may surprise you. No matter how many years you've been in business, it never hurts to remind yourself every now and then of some of the basic truths about retailing and to think about them in a new context—in easy-to-read, digestible bites.

# Book Reviews

Cary Grant pullover from *To Catch a Thief*, and Elizabeth Green Musselman pays homage to the iconic *Vertigo* poster with a shawl full of frenetic red lines. While fans of Hitchcock films will eagerly search for their favorites in the notes that accompany each pattern, you don't have to be a movie buff to enjoy this well-rounded collection.

## 30-Minute Crochet

By Carol Meldrum  
Barron's; \$16.99

ISBN: 978-1438003313

Little projects are big in today's market, and British designer Carol Meldrum has imagined a plethora of projects that, she assures us, can be crocheted in just 30 minutes or less. Sixty-plus discrete projects pack the pages of this colorful book, each calling for relatively small amounts of yarn and working up in a jiffy. If you're looking for practical projects, select from place mats, a cell-phone case, a string bag for wine bottles or a belt. Dying for the decorative? How about a lipstick case, tree ornaments or a photo frame border? Little kids will love finger puppets, a headband or animal ears, while grownups who are kids at heart will get a kick out of zombie pins or a mouse-shaped pincushion. Bow tie? Check. Amigurumi-style acorns and toadstool? Check. Bracelet and brooch? Check and check. Even the most time-challenged crocheter can manage to eke out several of these teeny treasures—and is sure to have a blast doing so.

## Adventures in Yarn Farming

By Barbara Parry  
Roost Books; \$27.95  
ISBN: 978-1590308233

Living on a working sheep farm may seem like the stuff of a yarn lover's dreams, but Barbara Parry can tell you firsthand how much hard work is involved. Parry and



her husband own Springdelle Farm in the Berkshires, where they raise sheep, goats and llamas. *Adventures in Yarn Farming* draws readers into Parry's world, where her charming and informative essays describe the beauty of each ordinary day, whether that day involves lambing, mowing fields, shearing, or spinning and dyeing yarn from her own sheep. The book is loosely organized by season, since farm life revolves so closely around the cycles of nature. Each section includes essays, a knitting pattern or two (by designers including Kate Gilbert and Melissa Morgan-Oakes), dreamy black-and-white photographs, the occasional instruction for hand-dyeing or -spinning projects, and even a recipe or two. Parry doesn't sugarcoat the amount of time, energy and physical labor required to run a farm, yet she also maintains a keen appreciation of the rhythms of life, the beauty that surrounds her and the deep satisfaction that comes with living on the land.

## Knits of a Feather

By Celeste Young  
Sellers Publishing; \$19.95  
ISBN: 978-1416209133



Inspiration is where you find it, and if you're designer Celeste Young, you find it in our feathered friends. Young's first book is a collection of knitting patterns—mainly accessories, plus a few women's sweaters—with an avian theme. Some designs take a literal approach: the Peacock tam, for example, uses a stranded colorwork motif based on the eye of a peacock's feather, while the Bluebird on My Shoulder sweater does in fact feature an intarsia bluebird that "sits" on the

wearer's shoulder. Other designs take a more abstract approach: The Murmuration shawl contains softly waving "V" motifs that look a lot like seagulls from a distance, the Robin's Egg wristlets use a speckled pattern reminiscent of an eggshell and the Feathered cloche features a deconstructed feather motif worked in duplicate stitch.

## Simple Knitting

By Ros Badger  
Mitchell Beazley/Hachette;  
\$19.99  
ISBN: 978-1845336967

## Simple Crochet

By Sara Sinaguglia  
Mitchell Beazley/Hachette;  
\$19.99 ISBN: 978-1845338343

Part of the new Creative Makers series, these good-looking hard-back volumes on knitting and crochet are designed to appeal to fashionistas who have yet to



discover these time-honored crafts, blending basic how-tos with a selection of trendy projects. Knitwear designer Ros Badger cites the period from the 1920s to the 1950s as her main inspiration; *Simple Knitting* includes 30 patterns for accessories with a touch of vintage style. Patterns range from basic, like a stockinette-stitch scarf and fingerless mitts knit flat and then seamed, to the more involved (e.g., a feather-and-fan scarf, a cabled beret), and



all are beautifully styled and knit in Debbie Bliss yarns.

Badger's crochet counterpart, Sara Sina-



## Bestseller Box

Here's what was hot on the bestseller lists for the third week of October 2013:

### Amazon Needlecrafts and Textile Crafts List

2. *Crochet One-Skein Wonders*, by Judith Durant (Storey)
4. *Lace One-Skein Wonders*, by Judith Durant (Storey)
6. *Woodland Knits*, by Stephanie Dosen (Taunton Press)
8. *Op Art Socks*, by Stephanie van der Linden (Interweave Press)
11. *Made by Hand*, by Lena Corwin (Stewart, Tabori & Chang)

### Barnes & Noble Knitting List

2. *Lace One-Skein Wonders*, by Judith Durant (Storey)
4. *Knit to Flatter*, by Amy Herzog (STC Craft)
5. *Woodland Knits*, by Stephanie Dosen (Taunton Press)
6. *Nicky Epstein Knits for Dolls*, by Nicky Epstein (Sixth & Spring Books)
7. *Crochet One-Skein Wonders*, by Judith Durant (Storey)

### Unicorn Books & Crafts Monthly Top 50 (September 2013)

2. *Knitting for the Absolute Beginner*, by Allison Dupernex (Search Press)
3. *Stitches for Tailored Knits*, by Jean Frost (XRX Books)
4. *Knit, Swirl*, by Sandra McIver (Seastack Publishing)
5. *Scarf Style 2*, by Ann Budd (Interweave Press)
6. *Sock-Yarn Shawls*, by Jen Lucas (Martingale & Co.)

guglia, takes a similar approach in *Simple Crochet*, mixing easier offerings like a potholder with more elaborate projects including a ruffled mohair scarf and a circular lace doily. The softly hued afghan that graces the cover is a lovely reminder that even relatively simple granny squares, worked in oddments of yarn collected over the years, can combine to create a striking family heirloom. Both books feature lovely photographs by Yuki Sugiura that evoke a vintage feel and show off the details in each project to perfection.

### Knits From an English Rose

By Louisa Harding

Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1936096657



Harding is known for elegant designs with a vintage but modern feel. In

the introduction to her latest book, she describes how her design sensibility developed, incorporating her roots as a girl in London, her exposure to Yorkshire while working for Rowan Yarns, and her lifelong fascination with fashion, costume and period clothing. All of these influences are evident in this collection of 25 women's accessories, knit in Harding's eponymous yarns. A clutch purse evokes 1940s glamour, wispy shrugs and lacy capelets conjure images of country gardens, and chic berets and faux-fur-trimmed wristers impart an urban touch. Harding's eye for detail is delightful: a luxe satin ribbon here, a sprinkling of beads there. The addition of a knitted rosette or bejeweled pin creates picture-perfect items; lush photography and glam styling make this book as delicious to look at as it is to knit from.

### Spin to Weave

By Sara Lamb

Interweave Press; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1596686489

Lamb describes herself as "a



spinner who weaves"; she clearly revels in the freedom this gives her to create exactly the fabric she wants, one ply at a time. In her latest book she aims to share her joy (and a wealth of technical knowledge) with fellow spinner/weavers, inspiring and instructing them so they too can produce the woven fabric they've been dreaming of. Lamb assumes her readers have already mastered the basics, concentrating on how spinning choices drastically or subtly affect woven fabric. She explains the myriad factors that combine to create a hand-spun yarn, including choice of fiber and breed, dyeing methods, fiber alignment, twist and plying. She then walks the reader through weaving choices—wedge and warp information, type of weave, finishing methods and more. Just as instructive as seeing what worked well are Lamb's notes on what didn't succeed: a discordant color that was overdyed to mute it, discarded wedge and weave structures, a lovely scarf that turned out a bit heavier than desired. Spinners and weavers will savor the enticing photographs of woven projects and hand-spun yarns throughout.

### Wedding Crochet

By Sandy Powers

Sellers Publishing; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1416209126



Crochet designer Sandy Powers presents a charming collection of handmade accessories—shrugs, shawls, fingerless gloves, headbands and more—likely to join gowns and veils as cherished wedding heirlooms. The bride-to-be will find plenty of choices for adornment: the

Rosebud shoulder wrap with a rose closure covers bare shoulders in elegant style; a saucy garter is almost too cute for throwing; and above-the-elbow fingerless gloves are the perfect finishing touch for strapless gowns. Powers makes sure that other members of the wedding party aren't left out, whether it's the ring bearer (a sweet pillow to cushion the rings as they're brought down the aisle), flower girl (she'll look adorable decked out in shrug and headband) or mom (a festive drawstring bag or lacy wrap gives her an accessory in no time). Attractive photography set against a beautiful New England landscape will inspire the soon-to-be-married (or their friends and relatives) to pick up a crochet hook to get ready for the big day.

### Woven to Wear

By Marilyn Murphy

Interweave Press; \$26.95

ISBN: 978-1596686519

Murphy skillfully blends patterns with technical advice in her new handweaving book. Inspired by



ethnic costumes and worldwide fabric traditions, Murphy places the focus squarely on the beautiful fabrics, keeping garment shapes simple and eschewing complex finishing. Projects are organized based on the technical topics they illustrate; for example, the "Yarns" section begins with an explanation of various yarn constructions, then demonstrates how novelty yarns like ribbon and chenille can create striking woven fabric. "Drape" explores how weaving structure, yarn choices and finishing methods contribute to the hand of the woven cloth. Subsequent chapters address designing with woven fabric, tips and techniques and finishing. Murphy supplements the projects and tips with profiles of nine handweaving clothing designers to further enrich and inspire. All but one of the projects use plain weave,

making the book accessible to newer weavers, and though all the featured projects were knit on floor looms, Murphy notes that most of them could be completed on tabletop-sized rigid heddle looms. Even longtime weavers will find fresh inspiration in the lovely fabrics Murphy has created.

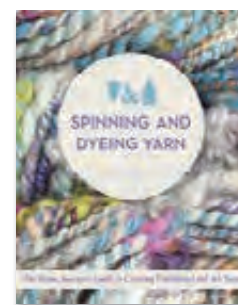
### Spinning and Dyeing Yarn

By Ashley Martineau

Barron's; \$29.99

ISBN: 978-0764166075

Enticed by the textures and colors of hand-spun yarn, particularly the eclectic "art yarns" that are so



popular? Interested in learning to dye and spin but not sure where to start? Mar-

tineau's comprehensive resource is a one-stop introduction to the basics of dyeing and spinning. She starts out by covering fiber identification (she sorts wool by fineness, then covers camelids, goats, rabbits, silk, plant and synthetic fibers), how to purchase and wash a fleece, and various methods of preparing fiber for spinning. The next section covers dyeing techniques, from immersion to hand painting, while the third section provides how-tos for the drop spindle, kick spindle and spinning wheel—and an entire chapter is devoted to the issue of setting the twist. Last, Martineau covers how to go professional, with tips for developing a brand, photographing your fiber and selling online. Given the breadth of topics she covers, Martineau can't provide excruciating detail on each topic, but she gives readers a wide-ranging overview, aided by inset boxes with troubleshooting tips. Plenty of clear photographs walk readers through the various techniques; profiles of fiber artists and their gorgeous yarns are sure to inspire.

# YARN FORWARD



# Knits ELECTRIC!

Day-glo brights have long been available in inexpensive craft yarns. But if we're to heed the fashion runways, these shades have assumed a genteel new identity—and boutique yarns are quickly following suit.

By Christina Behnke

Since Pitti Immagine Filati exhibited super-brights in January 2012—"Everywhere I looked there was neon," says Cia Abbott Bullemer, design director for Plymouth Yarn Co.—the common perception about these colors has been changing. Italian fashion is synonymous with drama, so it's no wonder that Italian yarn brands would be among the first to carry neon shades.

Taking advantage of mohair's brilliant dyeing qualities, **Grignasco Knits/Plymouth Yarn Co.** offered the distinction to its **Kid Seta (#5)** (70% super kid mohair, 30% silk; 230yds/25g), adding five neon shades (color 1412 shown here) to its lineup. The yarn boasts intense depth of color not only in the kitten-soft mohair halo but also in the thickset silk base, allowing for a penetrating, solid field of color when worked up.

Maintaining trueness of hue is key to keeping fluorescents looking rich and lustrous. Aided by the natural luster of 100 percent extra-fine merino wool—now in superwash—**Filatura Di Crosa/Tahki-Stacy Charles** gets it right with three new super-bright shades available in **Zara 14 (#12)** (49yds/50g). More akin to aqua than yellow-green, color 4002 (pictured) proves the adage that wearing neon flaunts a tan. Anyone who's bronzed from a midwinter getaway can show it off with a quick-knit hat—ask about the company's Hat Trix pattern promotion for retailers.

**Manos del Uruguay/Fairmount Fibers** was one of the first LYS institutions to embrace fluorescent color. Its neon colorways are never better than in 100% wool offerings like **Wool Clasica (#7)** (138yds/100g), which shows off colors such as 78 Kelly, 79 Chartreuse, 80 Highlighter and 81 Papaya at their most vivid. Based in cool tones, these kettle-dyed yarns achieve true electric color—see the aptly named 82 Shocking opposite and on the cover of this issue—effecting a phosphorescent, rather than luminescent, look.

In a collection of 160-plus shades as vast and varied as the **Cascade 220 (#9)** line, it's no surprise that **Cascade Yarns** would include a super-bright or two. Color 7828 Neon Yellow is a true primary yellow as rich and solid as it is bright. The intense tonality comes from dyed-in-the-wool coloration—fan out the fiber, and wisps of fleece look just as vivid as the yarn itself. Its ruggedness leads us to believe that this would be a fantastic felter. Work up an over-the-shoulder purse and you'll have a fashion-forward piece on hand that will last through spring and beyond.

Michael Delvecchio, creative director for **Universal Yarn**, is no

stranger to blacklight-friendly natural fibers. "The dye used in neon color can really do a number on the fiber, making finished yarns crispy," he admits, but innovations have allowed manufacturers "to get true neon color without damaging the yarn itself." For its part, roving-style **Classic Shades (#1)** (197yds/100g), constructed from a downy 70% acrylic/30% wool blend, is as supple and haloed as ever in color 737 Neon Kaleidoscope. The marled color graduations shift among hot yellow, lime, orange and magenta; white and navy sections offer effortless neutral pairing.

For anyone who wants to give this trend a try but fears an Eighties flashback, ombrés are a fantastic way to incorporate subtle pops of fluorescent color into a project. The four new super-bright colorways in **Trendsetter Yarns' Phoenix (#11)** (66% viscose, 34% cotton; 100yds/50g) are much more Copacabana than Culture Club. We'd love to see a slinky wrap in 377 Kiwi (pictured), which produces graduated chartreuse and lime stripes on an elegant pale mint background. The colorway offsets the yarn's alternating runs of matte smooth and glossy thick-and-thin chainette, which gets its texture from looser-spun slubs in the base threads.

Aimed at winter-athlete types with a budding interest in yarn crafts, the newly developed **My Mountain** by **Schachenmayr** carries neon shades throughout its entire range, taking advantage of these colors' high nighttime visibility. The most understated yarn in the collection, fluffy chainette **Lova (#2)** (67% acrylic, 30% wool, 3% polyamide; 55yds/50g), concentrates fluorescent color in intermittent all-acrylic streaks whose gleam offers added contrast against the soft, neutral-colored wool-blend background. The neon accents in the eight shades range from screaming bright—such as color 80 Grey-Yellow Spot, shown here, and classic hot pink—to quieter teal and raspberry.

Of course, ombrés are also a great excuse to pack in maximum color. The newest addition to the Zauberbball family, **Schoppel Wolle/Skacel Collection Reggae Ombré (#8)** (109yds/50g) incorporates acid shades into several of its 31 colorways. But none is so dazzling as 1873 (pictured), which fluctuates between cool fluorescent red and burnt orange. The combination calls to mind a rhythmically flashing neon sign—even the lightly felted roving strand resembles a neon tube. Constructed of 100% merino, the yarn itself is just as soft and supple as you'd expect



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## Knits ELECTRIC

(continued from page 23)



this fiber to be, with a gentle gleam.

Luxury fiber already makes a statement, so why not go to the limit with a striking color? "I love our neon shades," says Jane Saffir of **Jade Sapphire Exotic Fibres**, who added six neons to the collection in June 2011. Brights are never more radiant than when presented in a luminous fiber blend such as **Silk Cashmere (#3)** (55% silk, 45% cashmere; 400yds/55g), a tender, toothy lace-weight with a hand akin to antique silk velvet. A lavish variation on the usual solid neons, 146 Periwinkle Pink (shown) enriches its electric lavender base with a deeper-toned violet glaze. (Its inverse, 145 Victorian Violets, is Saffir's "very favorite" of the nearly 200 colorways.)

Another purveyor of high-luxury fiber, **Artyarns** has never shied away from hand-dyeing acid brights. Established shades in its vast collection include Hot Pink 322 and Chartreuse 325; while recently added color 275 (shown) won't glow under a blacklight, this intense orange hue contains incandescent wisps of gold. Augmenting the effect are gleaming silk strands playing off shimmering cashmere (50% each) in the ambrosially soft **Ensemble 4 (#4)** (200yds/80g). Though the yarn is made up of four single-ply strands essentially lying side by side, it knits up with a rounded construction, creating even stitchwork and elastic fabric.

If you're not convinced that the neon trend is here to stay, understated options exist. The colors in **The Fibre Co./Kelbourne Woolens Tundra (#10)** (120yds/100g) range are each inspired by the arctic landscape, so what would such a collection be without Aurora (pictured)? This traditional chartreuse evokes the phosphorescence of its namesake thanks to intense color saturation and a touch of 10% silk in a base of 60% baby alpaca and 30% merino wool. A restrained alternative to day-glo brights, it's flattering to a wider range of skintones than its brighter cousins and, even in a full-size garment, likely wouldn't overwhelm the wearer.

When you separate it from the 24 colors in the **Spud & Chloë Outer (#6)** (60yds/100g) range and place it next to other fluorescents, color 7218 Fearless reveals itself to be suited more to sunny personalities than brazen ones—less Sour Patch Kids, more lemon meringue pie. Though the fibers are anchored by and achieve their energetic corkscrew twist from 65% superwash wool, it's the fuzzy patina and cuddly softness—where the 35% organic cotton content makes itself known—that characterize this yarn. The cotton is essential to shading, too; its white tonality softens the impact of the color while buoying its brightness.

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—Cara Romano,  
Cara Romano Studio Jewelry



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How much, exactly? A lot. Because I'm TNNA's director, I may be a little biased, so let me back up my claims with supporting facts:

- Our events provide members with unparalleled access to today's in-demand teachers and vendors. Professionals gather at our shows to learn the latest techniques and trends in the yarn industry and other needlearts disciplines. Classes are offered based on member input, ensuring that what's being taught is what's relevant for today's retailers. Our show-floor hours provide plenty of opportunity to speak with vendors and representatives at length about your shop's individual needs and to see and touch new and popular products and patterns. Plus, you can check out our legendary Fall/Winter and

Spring/Summer fashion shows, where designers and companies show off their latest work.

- We encourage learning from and networking with colleagues. In addition to meeting with like-minded professionals, TNNA members can stay in touch with other business owners throughout the year thanks to our member directory (online and in print), our LinkedIn Group (open only to members, so you can discuss industry issues in depth), and even through our presence on Facebook, Twitter and Ravelry.

- We are constantly taking the pulse of the industry. Our State of the Specialty NeedleArts Industry surveys and reports, which we publish every two to three years, provide insights that you just can't get anywhere else.

- Our programs can help you grow your business. From discount programs with UPS and Choice Hotels to outreach programs like Stitch N' Pitch and the Needle Arts Mentoring Program (NAMP), every endeavor we undertake is done so with our members' business health in mind. We even offer what many

consider the gold standard for teaching beginning knitters and crocheters: our "How to" book series. And we're not just teaching your customers; we can teach you too with our "Business Advisory" series.

As with all things, you get out of your membership what you put into it. We invite you to see for yourself what TNNA has to offer: Become a member and gain online access to our survey results, sign up for a discount program, or volunteer for NAMP, Maker Faire or another outreach event. When you register for the upcoming Winter Trade Show (January 11-13 in San Diego), you'll see just how easy it is to take a class, walk the show floor, attend the fashion show and network with your peers. In fact, I guarantee you'll profit from the partnership.

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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## The Legacy of Warm Up America

The industry lost a dear friend and an inspiring advocate when Evie Rosen passed away last year. As a retailer herself, she worked tirelessly to professionalize the status of independent retailers, serving first on the board of the American Professional Needlework Retailers, a regional association, and later as the first Associate Member retailer to serve on TNNA's board.

As an educator, she shared her knitting expertise with thousands and authored one of Leisure Arts' best-selling books on how to knit. She was also instrumental in developing the Craft Yarn Council's Certified Instructors Program in the early 1980s and served as a master teacher in the program until her passing.

Evie was also involved with her community and cared deeply about people. When she started knitting afghans for a local Salvation Army shelter in the early 1990s, she recognized there was a bigger need than one person could fill. That's when she came up with two brilliant

ideas: first, breaking down the process of stitching an afghan into smaller parts (7" x 9" sections) to make it easier for more people to contribute, then creating Warm Up America! (WUA) as a vehicle for collecting and distributing afghans and afghan pieces. This simple concept galvanized scores of new knitters and crocheters to take up the crafts.

Today, WUA is one of the best-known charities in the industry and stands as Evie's lasting legacy. She'd be the first to say she had lots of support to make WUA what it is today. First, there was backing from TNNA and later from the Craft Yarn Council, which helped her to incorporate WUA as a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation. Most importantly, when she was overwhelmed with donated afghan sections at her shop and home, CYC provided office space and staff support for the charity in its North Carolina office.

She was most proud of the numbers of WUA afghans that were delivered to people in need, which at last count was 750,000 and growing.

Next year, the charity will be expanding beyond the United States to reach even more people.

The foundation has applied for a trademark for the name Warm Up Canada to better serve our Canadian neighbors. For years, the foundation has received letters from avid Canadian knitters and crocheters asking about forming groups in their towns and cities. They want their afghans to be sent to individuals and social service agencies in Canada, which goes hand in hand with Evie's main goal: neighbors helping neighbors. With the support of Michaels Stores across Canada, volunteers will be able to drop off afghan sections and completed afghans at their local Michaels for distribution or donate their finished afghans within their own communities. Watch the WUA and CYC websites for up-to-the-minute information on our progress in Canada.

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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# The Knitting Guild Association

BY PENNY SITLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## We're In This Together

**W**ith so many shared goals, local yarn shops and the Knitting Guild Association (TKGA) have a symbiotic relationship. We both encourage as many people to knit as possible, and we want to teach all of them as much about knitting as is achievable. After all, the more they know, the more they'll knit—and the more they knit, the more yarn, patterns, books and needles they'll buy.

To keep people engaged with their knitting, TKGA offers education to improve our members' skill levels. We start with a Learn to Knit lesson and progress through correspondence courses that include such topics as "Basics, Basics, Basics" and "Understanding Gauge." These classes build a great base and prepare knitters for the TKGA Master Knitting Program, which is available for both hand and machine knitting. The Master Knitting Program is a rigorous three-level course in which knitters create swatches and do research in preparation for writing reports about various knitting topics. Their work is mailed to TKGA's Masters Committee

members, who review it and return it to the student with comments, often with suggestions for improvements. By the time they complete Level 3, students have knit many accessories and a sweater. For them to be awarded a Master Knitter pin and the coveted title of Master Knitter, their knitting must be topnotch.

Along the way, members reap more educational benefits from our member publication, *Cast On* magazine. Lessons on techniques and design components, written by esteemed Masters Committee members, are included in every issue. Additional patterns follow up on what has been learned in the lessons.

My point in describing the education offered to knitters by TKGA is to reinforce the idea that retailers and TKGA can have a mutually beneficial relationship with knitters. We're constantly engaging our members—your customers—by enhancing their skill set and taking them to the next level. We include reviews in the magazine of current yarns, tools, books and other fiber-centric products to encourage members to seek out new items in their local yarn shops. As our

members increase their knowledge, you will see shoppers planning more and more advanced projects, purchasing yarns for more than just scarves, and asking for products they've read about in *Cast On*. We hope your shop will encourage local guilds to visit, and perhaps host regular meetings there. If you carry *Cast On*, you're introducing TKGA to your customers. You may even offer classes based on the lessons in the magazine, since the education doesn't stop with us.

Such synergy will help all of us as we build relationships with our customers and members. We want them to be successful in their knitting endeavors, and together we can encourage knitters to reap the benefits of being engaged with their local yarn shops and their national association.

The Knitting Guild Association (TKGA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting knitting. Its official publication is *Cast On* magazine, published quarterly.

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# Crochet Guild of America

BY CARI CLEMENT, PRESIDENT

## When You Think Crochet, Think CGOA

**W**hether you're a new crocheter or have been stitching for years, the Crochet Guild of America is your home for all things crochet. As I write this column in late September, we are eagerly awaiting our Fall Knit and Crochet Show conference in North Carolina, a highlight of which is a highly anticipated design competition. An astounding 103 entries are vying for a grand prize of \$1,000, to be awarded by a panel of judges including editors, publishers, high-profile designers and yarn company executives. Show attendees can vote for a "People's Choice" winner as well.

At the show we will celebrate the newest inductee into the Jean Leinhauser CGOA Crochet Hall of Fame. This year's winner, chosen by member ballots, is Jean's business partner of many years, Rita Weiss, who will be honored at the ceremony. Weiss, a true professional, is well known for tirelessly promoting the craft even during its lean years.

On a personal note, this column marks my

last as president of CGOA, as I have served the maximum number of years allowed on the board. Every president of an organization brings to the table particular interests and passions. In my case, I set three goals when I took office, two of which came to fruition during my tenure; I hope the other will be ongoing after my departure.

My first order of business was to redesign CGOA's website, [crochet.org](http://crochet.org), so that it better "speaks" crochet and is more user-friendly. The former was accomplished by changing the banner to a spectacular motif piece created just for the website by Susan Lowman, as well as an informative slide show directed by fellow board member Marcy Smith, who specializes in website functionality. (Go to [crochet.org](http://crochet.org) to see it for yourself.) Number two was to ask major players outside our organization for suggestions on ways to improve CGOA and build membership. We now have those suggestions, and the CGOA board is in the process of analyzing and implementing them.

Number three was to increase the benefits

for all members, even ones who cannot attend a conference, which means boosting the number and benefits of local chapters. I do hope the next president will expand on this area now that the website is one that serves members' needs and encourages new crocheters to join.

I have seen plenty of exciting changes in my time on the board. Crochet now is all about style—interesting motifs, romantic lace looks and statement jewelry are particularly on-trend. So many yarns available in yarn shops are perfect for these looks, including sock-weight, lace-weight, self-striping and hand-painted yarns. Shops that make an effort to attract crocheters know it's an easy way to increase sales.

The year 2014 marks CGOA's 20th anniversary. I can't wait to see what the future has in store for both the organization and the millions of crochet fans nationwide.

For more information about the Crochet Guild of America, visit [crochet.org](http://crochet.org) or e-mail [CGOA@offinger.com](mailto:CGOA@offinger.com).

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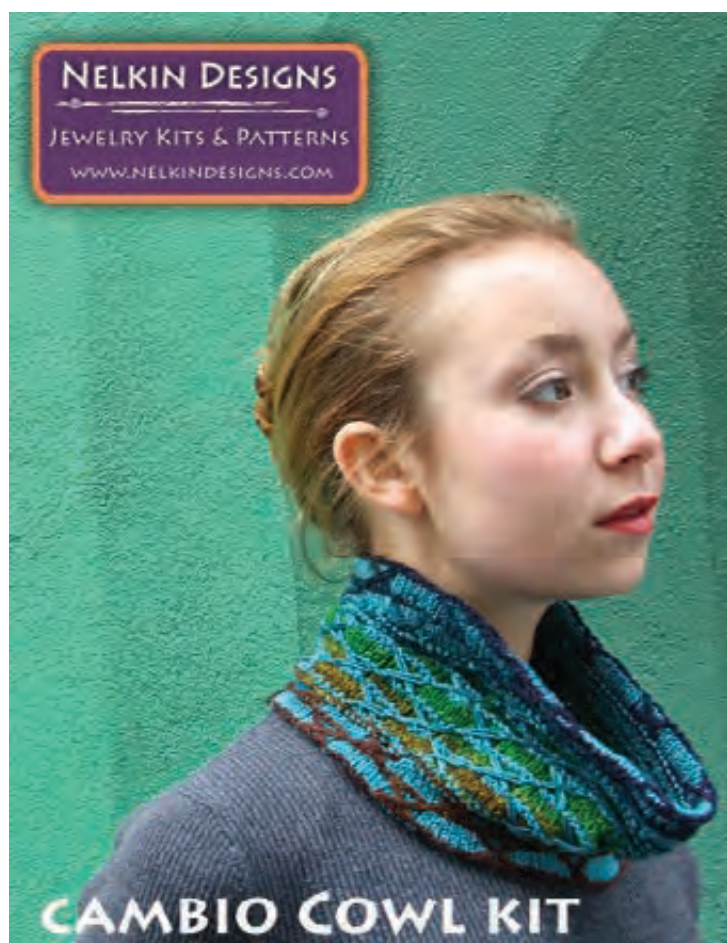
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# Everybody's Talking

Keeping an eye on “viral” trends in the knitting world can lead to great word of mouth for your shop.

BY CATHY RUMFELT

**T**he world of knitting and crafting is not immune to viral trends. People start talking about a pattern or yarn, and all of a sudden everyone is “infected”: Remember when nearly every knitter had a Clapotis or a Central Park hoodie on her needles? And you can hardly walk outside these days without running into a yarn-bombed piece of real estate.

In his book *Contagious*, Jonah Berger delves into the psychology of what causes something to go viral, citing things like social currency (being “in the know”), practicality (something knitting has in spades), stories (who or what is behind the knitting), emotion (knitting for a cause) and more. Use these concepts as a jumping-off point for a clever marketing campaign that will get the word out about your shop and, hopefully, grow your bottom line.

## Clue into the zeitgeist

Meera Kothari Cho, owner of KnitKnack in Maplewood, New Jersey, tapped into a pop-culture trend when she made a “Call Me Maybe” spoof video in the summer of 2012. Cho describes how the “Cast On Baby” video came about: “Carly Rae Jepsen’s ‘Call Me Maybe’ was the feel-good song of the summer, and everyone was parodying it. One evening I said to our knitting group, ‘I’m surprised no one has done a yarn-related version,’ and then I said something like ‘Cast on, baby!’ Suddenly all these lyrics came to me.”

The response to the video, shot in her store and featuring shop regulars, has been amazing—80,000 hits to date, according to Cho. “Without fail, people tell us that it makes them happy. We’re still getting e-mails telling us how much they appreciate it.” The global exposure benefited her store in tangible ways: In the weeks following the video’s launch, her customer base expanded and yarn companies she was eager to do business with suddenly knew her name.

Keeping abreast of popular culture paid off for Cho; doing the same can work for you as well. For instance, interesting knitwear shows up in movies and on TV all the time. Seek out a similar pattern—an interesting scarf worn by a popular actress, perhaps—and make the association for your customers. Or take advantage

of ready-made pop-culture tie-ins: *The Unofficial Harry Potter Knits* from Interweave Press features knits inspired by J.K. Rowling’s popular series and has created a stir in many yarn shops. “I sold out of my first delivery on the day I received the book, then sold another 15 copies in the next two weeks,” says Mary Penxa of Two Rivers Yarns in Brunswick, Maryland. “I advertised a knit-along for the Mermaid’s Song shawl and sold more lace-weight yarn in those two weeks than I’ve sold in the past year and a half.” Know any *Dr. Who* fans? Sponsor a knit-along for the Bigger on the Inside shawl, which features a Tardis-shaped eyelet motif, available at Knitty.com.

## Tell your story

The popularity of the New York Sheep and Wool Festival, held in Rhinebeck, New York, each fall, has led more and more knitters to make themselves a “Rhinebeck sweater,” which they proudly show off to all the other knitters they meet at the weekend-long show. Knitters who can’t attend are actively participating in this trend as well, sharing their knitting and stories through social media.

Mary-Heather Cogar, a knitwear designer and vice-president of operations at Ravelry.com, is one of those who’s caught the Rhinebeck bug, knitting Rhinebeck sweaters for three years running: “It is fun to knit along with people from around the world—cheering each other on, getting ideas for pattern mods, and showing off our beautiful FOs to other crafters who share the same passion,” she says.

Cogar has also contributed a design to Ysolda Teague’s upcoming book *The Rhinebeck Sweater*, which examines knitters’ desire to be part of the pack and combines stories and patterns. Knitters love to share, and knitting a sweater on a deadline creates lots of interesting tales: frantic car knitting, blocking pieces in a hotel room and so on.

Whether people in your area attend the festival or not, your store can benefit from Rhinebeck fever. Get knitters thinking about their Rhinebeck sweater in the otherwise slow months of June and July, maybe scheduling a measuring party to help customers size their garments (and purchase the right quantity of yarn from your shelves). Follow up with a Rhinebeck knit-

along, documented on your shop’s blog or in your Ravelry group, to encourage your customers to join in the fun.

Though predicting what will go viral is not a sure science, keeping up to date on what knitters are talking about (the next must-have pattern, the most popular knit-alongs and charity projects)—both inside and outside the world of knitting—can help you create something exciting for your shop, ultimately bringing in new customers and racking up sales.

Cathy Rumfelt is a writer and knitter living in Cumming, Georgia. She knit her first Rhinebeck sweater last year.

## The Contagious Element

Consider author Jonah Berger’s theories about what makes certain ideas, events or things go viral when planning for your shop.

- **Practicality:** Know what works for your customers. “In my shop, my scarf pattern Beachwalker took off after I knit several samples in various colorways,” says Chris Hanner, owner of My Favorite Thimble in St. Simon’s Island, Georgia. “The beach theme and being located on an island helped.”
- **Stories:** People love to hear others’ stories and share their own. The #Caribou Knits campaign from Caribou Coffee last October encouraged knitters to tweet about the impact cancer has had on their lives. For every use of the hashtag, 1 inch of a scarf was machine-knit; finished scarves were donated to a cancer charity.
- **Social currency:** Keep abreast of what the industry and knit bloggers are talking about. “In my experience, anything knitting-related—patterns, yarn, needles—that the Yarn Harlot blogs about will most likely go viral,” says Chris Hanner of My Favorite Thimble.
- **Emotion:** “I think the Rhinebeck sweater phenomenon, and the idea of viral knits in general, is fun for knitters because it’s another way to join a community of fellow yarn lovers both near and far,” says Ravelry’s Mary-Heather Cogar.

A woman with curly hair is shown from the chest up, holding a large red leather bag. Her hands are pressed together in a prayer-like gesture, resting on the bag's handles. She is wearing a black tank top. The background is a bright, sunny outdoor setting with a cityscape visible in the distance. There are faint blue floral patterns in the upper left corner.

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# A Little Help From a Friend

Develop a relationship with your local bank and you may be better poised to take advantage of loan opportunities.

BY JACKIE PAWLOWSKI

**N**ot only do LYSOs have to know the ins and outs of a fiber's content, the pros and cons of different needle materials and the latest in color and fashion trends; they also need to know how to navigate the financial side of the business: establishing banking relationships, obtaining financing, filing taxes, managing compliance issues and more. It can be a daunting task to figure out what to do, and who to call, or even what questions to ask.

As a small business owner, one of the best things you can do for your business is to find a reputable bank and get to know the manager, loan officer and other branch employees. A good bank will value you and your business, can provide advice and resources as you navigate financial purchases or transactions, ease the way to a line of credit that will help you grow your existing business or provide a loan to purchase or start a new business. Moreover, a good bank manager and loan officer can put you in touch with other local professionals who can be of assistance to you: accountants, lawyers, insurance agents and others experienced in meeting the needs of small business owners.

In addition to being a key general resource, local banks are the gateways to Small Business Administration (SBA) loan programs. The SBA is a government agency tasked with providing resources and aid to help grow and support small businesses. What does this mean? The government knows that it's hard for small businesses to get loans since they generally don't have a lot of cash on hand or other valuable assets that the bank can use to secure the loan (e.g., collateral that the bank can take in the event of non-payment). To entice banks to make the loans anyway, the federal government guarantees up to 75 percent of SBA loan amounts, substantially reducing the bank's risk.

## Get the application in

The most popular loan for a small business is the SBA 7(a) loan program, which can be used for a variety of business purposes. During the application process, you'll need to provide financial information that demonstrates your ability to repay the loan. This typically includes a current profit and loss statement, a detailed one-year projec-

tion of income and expenses, and a written explanation of how you expect to achieve the projections.

In the yarn industry, there are two main ways these loans can be used: to purchase or start a new business and to fund the growth of an existing business. In the first case, you would apply for an installment loan. For example, if you'd like to purchase an existing yarn store, you might apply for the purchase price plus a dollar amount for expenses you anticipate you'll incur to reopen the shop under new management. Then you would repay the loan (plus interest) over a 2-, 3- or 5-year period, as determined by financial projections and the loan approval. In many cases, you can also apply for interest-only payments for up to six months, until revenues from the new business are established.

If you are looking to expand your existing business, you would apply for a line of credit. For example, if you wanted to bring in additional product lines, you would draw on your line of credit to make the inventory purchase and pay interest on the amount drawn until you make repayment 60 to 120 days later, after the inventory is sold.

## Don't take it personally

Keep in mind that not all banks are equally committed to giving loans. When Cynthia Curtis purchased The Sheep Shack in Holden, Massachusetts, in 2011, she visited several area banks looking for a loan, but "no one was interested. In fact, one wouldn't even let me in the door. It was so disheartening, I almost gave up," she laments. But eventually she found the right match. "I saw Southbridge Savings on my way home one day and thought I might as well give it a try. They welcomed me in, really listened to what I wanted to do, and helped me the whole way through the process."

Understand that a bank may say no for reasons that have nothing to do with you. Some banks focus on home loans, others on commercial real estate—it all depends on that branch's goals. Remember, though, that debt should only be used to fund growth. If your business is not profitable, it is highly inadvisable to take out a loan. The only way a business can repay debt is out of profit, so be sure there will be enough profit to pay back the loan and still pay yourself,

which will make you a more desirable loan candidate in the eyes of a bank.

The SBA has also created nearly 100 Women's Business Centers (WBCs) nationwide, which are designed to help women start and grow small businesses. If you're unsure about the next steps for your business, this could be a great place to learn more. To find a Women's Business Center near you, visit [www.sba.gov/tools/local-assistance/wbc](http://www.sba.gov/tools/local-assistance/wbc).

Jackie Pawlowski has worked in finance for more than a decade. Her passion for making things prompted her to join Amy Herzog Designs in early 2013.

## The Nitty-Gritty of SBA Loans

**A 7(a) loan can be used for any of the following:**

- To provide long-term working capital to pay for operational expenses, accounts payable and/or to purchase inventory
- For short-term working capital needs, including seasonal financing
- To purchase equipment, furniture, supplies or materials
- To purchase real estate, including land and buildings
- To construct a new building or renovate an existing building
- To establish a new business or assist in the acquisition, operation or expansion of an existing business

**SBA loans cannot be used for these purposes:**

- To refinance existing debt where the lender is in a position to sustain a loss and the SBA would take over that loss through refinancing
- To effect a partial change of business ownership or a change that will not benefit the business
- To permit the reimbursement of funds owed to any owner, including any equity injection or injection of capital to continue the business until the SBA-backed loan is disbursed
- To repay delinquent state or federal withholding taxes or other funds that should be held in trust or escrow
- For a purpose that is not considered to be a sound business purpose as determined by the SBA

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# Building a Better Blog Tour

Take your content on the virtual road to reach more people along the way.

BY STEFANIE GOODWIN-RITTER

**B**log tours are not new to the knitting industry. Early adopters of technology, knitters have been actively using blogs to get the word out for years. Running a successful blog tour takes some planning and thoughtfulness, but blogs can help spread news of a new product, yarn or book, a charity project, an upcoming event or any other stitching-related piece of news faster and more efficiently than any other form of social media.

Blog tours come in all shapes and sizes, but in general these grass-roots marketing initiatives consist of several posts from different bloggers about the same topic or event, all linking back to your site. A blog tour gives your company access to more readers than just the ones who read your store blog or follow you via social media; it can also improve your own site's SEO with new, active referral links.

Designer Carol Feller sees blog tours as excellent for community building, too: "They are the fastest and most cost-effective way, in terms of both time and money, for me to reach a wider audience and let them know what I'm doing.... They also create a symbiotic relationship with other bloggers when I write about their projects. We're a small community, and it's nice when we all work together."

## Choose wisely

Deciding which bloggers to approach is your first step. Ask your customers which blogs and podcasts they enjoy and check out some of the blogging groups on Ravelry to create your initial list. Reach out to local bloggers for in-store events, but go ahead and contact bloggers from farther afield if you're looking for more exposure. Once you get a few bloggers on board, ask them for recommendations—you might be surprised where you end up.

Assess the bloggers' social-media reach in order to tap into their followings. Look for bloggers who have a good number of followers on Twitter or Facebook; some have large followings in their own Ravelry groups (often they have one or two but not all three). You can also see how many subscribers a blog has in a few RSS feeders—Feedly, for one—

to get a sense of a blog's reach.

When Eucalan introduced its new jasmine-scented wool wash Wrapture in 2012, the company approached bloggers in several sectors so it could reach as broad a group as possible: crafting/knitting, lingerie and cloth-diapering parents. "The Wrapture blog tour encouraged each blogger to share his or her area of expertise in relation to the product," says Jennifer Edgar, managing director of Eucalan. "For example, Colleen Babcock of The Magic Bean [a crafting site] created a free doll pattern inspired by the new scent; Jennifer Hansen of Stitch Diva Studios shared her tips for washing and blocking swatches; and The Green Mountain Spinnery talked about their eco-friendly practices, which includes using Eucalan during the final rinse for their yarn." Try to find a similar balance of bloggers for your own tour to get different perspectives on your product or event and to reduce the overlap in audiences.

Next, decide if you'll include giveaways to create buzz and entice readers. It can be tempting to offer prizes at each blog tour stop, but this can backfire by reducing in-store sales or unintentionally encouraging people to wait and see if they'll win a prize before making a purchase. Before you consider giveaways, know your overall plan: how many stops will feature prizes, who will be responsible for shipping them, what your geographic limits will be, and how the winners will be chosen.

Aim for eight to ten blogs if possible, and space their posts every two to three days. Creating a shareable spreadsheet or calendar to keep track of each stop's reserved date and topic will help you maintain your sanity and make it easier for participants to promote other stops throughout the tour.

## Think creatively about content

A blog tour is only as good as the content put forth, so work to ensure its quality. Courtney Kelley of Kelbourne Woolens laments how some tours have a tendency to become "just a string of reviews and some giveaways. We wanted to get people more involved." Her company recently hosted an interactive blog tour using Polyvore.com styleboards to promote the re-

lease of the pattern booklet *Kelbourne Woolens Vol. 1*. The tour began with each participating blogger choosing one pattern from the collection to build an online styleboard demonstrating a complete outfit. "It became so popular that readers ended up submitting their own styleboards using designs from the collection," Kelley notes.

Although a blog tour takes time and dedication, its potential to broaden your customer base is certainly worth the effort. By thinking creatively and putting your own unique spin on the blog-tour format, your time investment is sure to pay you back in spades.

Stefanie Goodwin-Ritter is a team member of The Wool Wide Web, a consultancy firm to the yarn industry. She also spins, designs and blogs at [handmadebystefanie.blogspot.com](http://handmadebystefanie.blogspot.com)

## Assessing Your Effectiveness

Knowing how well your tour worked will help you plan future ones.

- **Track your analytics.** Look to see where referral traffic is coming from and whether the participating bloggers are truly driving traffic to your site. Ideally, each post will continue to give you steady traffic even after the tour has ended, provided the blog content is informative and interesting enough to readers. If you have a webmaster who handles this side of the business, be sure to alert him about your plans and ask him to provide some stats during and after the tour.
- **Set a watchword.** Offer a coupon code that will unlock a discount (either online or with an in-store purchase) or a secret word that enters customers in a raffle so that you can track the number of readers being engaged by your tour, even if they aren't clicking through to your website.



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# Teasing Out the Fluff

Adding spinning supplies to your merchandise mix is a sure way to increase sales.

BY LIZ GIPSON

**T**he 2013 State of the Specialty NeedleArts survey released last year showed some exciting results for spinning. Though just over 50 percent of retail yarn shops report that they sell fibers, spinners are managing to outspend knitters. Fiber-free LYSes, take note: Shops that stock fiber view it as a good way to drive sales and attract new customers.

## Keeping up with the trend

Lori Kirk of Cowgirl Yarns in Laramie, Wyoming, knew nothing about unspun fiber until her spinning customers began asking her to stock it. She brought in a bit of local fiber on spec, which drew a wave of new customers. "We sell only fibers sourced locally, including raw fleece, which is enormously popular," Kirk says. Spinners aren't the only ones who are buying; a number of her customers are purchasing fiber, then handing it over to local spinners for custom spinning.

If you're in the beginning stages of adding fiber to your product mix, buying from a larger, more established vendor may be the way to go. Typical minimum orders start at \$500, although smaller fiber-specific suppliers may have smaller minimums. You should also check with your current yarn vendors to see if they carry fiber; you may be surprised by the number who do.

John Novak of Village Spinning & Weaving in Solvang, California, has been selling fiber since 1992. His experience tallies with survey results suggesting that 70 percent of spinners buy fibers based on their ability to see them with their own eyes before making a purchase. "If you don't have it on hand, you'll most likely lose the sale," Novak states. He often sees a sudden rush on a specific fiber that's been mentioned in a thread on Ravelry or in someone's blog. "Trends for spinning are hard to predict, so you just have to be ready." Novak also notes the ample opportunities stores have to sell related products and classes: "Spinners don't always know what to do with those beautiful hand-painted braids." Hosting classes on using specific fiber types or offering related learning materials and equipment will help boost sales and establish your shop as a resource for this information.

## Felting sustains sales

Both Novak and Tina Feir of Gate City Yarns in

Greensboro, North Carolina, note that many of their fiber sales are actually made to felters. "During the recent lean times, felting kept my doors open," admits Feir. "Felters want lots of colors in small amounts, and they are willing to pay for it." She buys fiber in large quantities to get a good price and then keeps her staff busy winding off 1-ounce balls. "I can charge more by selling by the ounce, even with labor costs. A felter can easily drop \$60 on fibers for a project," which range from needle-felted gnomes to wet-felted hats to nuno felting for garments.

Feir devotes a large wall in the front of the store to felting and spinning fiber and rotates the stock regularly. Gate City Yarns is the only shop in the area that offers fiber, making it a destination for locals and out-of-town shoppers alike.

## Drive shop traffic with fiber

Think about marketing your fiber the same way you would market the yarns you carry. Consider

a new fiber feature each month. Create a display that includes information about the quality of the fiber ("great for beginners"), how it spins up ("blooms beautifully in worsted and semi-worsted yarns") and the kinds of projects that are a good match for its properties ("tackle that first hand-spun sweater"). Display samples of yarn spun from your fiber, perhaps including a few spindles nearby.

Think of all the information you see on shelves in a wine shop. Good descriptions will help your customers feel informed enough to make a purchase. Ask your vendors or a good customer who spins to help you with these descriptions. By educating yourself about fiber and its characteristics, you will also find that you've become a better yarn seller.

**Liz Gipson** (lizgipson.com) offers spinning and weaving content marketing support to the yarn industry.

## A Short Guide to Fiber Preparation

Good fiber prep takes the best advantage of a fiber's inherent characteristics. In turn, spinners choose different spinning techniques to take advantage of how a fiber is prepared. Retailers often puzzle over the terminology used to describe fiber preparation and put-up available to them.

Listed here are the most common fiber preparations available for wholesale purchase.

- **Roving** is defined as a continuous, drawn-out length of carded fiber. Carding on an industrial level uses many carding drums (circular tubes with a rough cloth like the teeth of a hairbrush around them) to jumble the fibers. The result is fiber preparation that is not of uniform length, though good shearing, sorting and carding will ensure that there are no "short cuts" of fiber or non-desirable debris in the roving. However, the term "roving" is in danger of becoming a generic term, and the word is often used to describe any fiber, carded or combed, that comes in a rope-like form. The rope of fibers has a slight twist, caused by coiling as it is stored in preparation for commercial spinning.
- **Sliver** is also a carded preparation. The commercially defined difference between sliver and roving is that a coil of sliver doesn't have any twist and is a bit thicker in diameter.
- **Top** is quickly becoming the most widely

available commercial fiber preparation. The fibers are processed either by combing alone or by carding and then combing so that the fiber is free of debris and is of uniform length and alignment.

- **Cloud** is a popular preparation for down fibers such as yak, bison, cashmere and angora. It is washed and de-haired but minimally processed to create a soft "cloud" of fibers.

- A **batt** is a rectangular sheet of carded fiber. A few small artisan dyers and hand spinners are offering batts made on smaller domestic hand-cranked drum carders. Many creative blends are possible that can't be replicated on big machinery.

- **Punis** are made with handcards and are a commercially available preparation for cotton fiber. The fiber is carded and then tightly rolled lengthwise around a small core. The wool equivalent is a **rolag**, which is rolled loosely without a core. Commercially available rolags are rare.

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# Stop Counting Sheep!

Make time for a full night's sleep and wake up ready to tackle a new day.

BY CLAIRE LUI

**T**hough knitters love sheep, counting flocks of them before going to bed isn't doing you any favors. Of course, if you're not getting enough sleep, you're not alone: Millions of Americans share your dilemma. In fact, the problem is so widespread that the Harvard Business School estimates that in 2011 sleep deprivation cost U.S. businesses \$63.2 billion in lost productivity.

It's obvious why you probably aren't sleeping enough: Small-business owners struggle with the pressures of around-the-clock social media demands, the need to catch up on correspondence and paperwork and, well, *life* after the store closes, leaving you with less time to snooze. But as John T. Peachey, Behavioral Sleep Medicine Fellow at Stanford University School of Medicine, says, "Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury. So it is important to recognize the ways in which lost sleep can have a negative impact on your daytime functioning and, ultimately, on how you run your business."

Michael Breus, a psychologist who specializes in sleep disorders, says, "Running a small business is always tough because every sale counts toward the bottom line. So most small-business owners work extra hard, which often translates to longer hours [on the job]." But as Dr. Breus points out, functioning on insufficient sleep "is how mistakes and miscalculations occur, and what you cannot afford are these types of errors in judgment, because a small business has a much harder time absorbing these errors than a larger one does."

So how can you break your bad habits? Consider a few simple behavioral changes that can make all the difference.

## Set the scene

To start, assess just how tired you really are as you prepare for bed—as perverse as it sounds, you may not be physically tired enough to sleep. When we're busy with the demands of our jobs, it's easy to let exercise fall by the wayside. But regular workouts will help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly by making your body more tired. Exercise, however, does stimulate the body, so either work out in the morning or finish up at least three hours before you want to hit the sack.

The same philosophy goes for eating: Be sure to finish dinner several hours before lights out. The more time your body has to digest your dinner before sleeping, the more comfortable you'll be and the less likely it is you'll have indigestion or heartburn, two common causes of insomnia.

You should also create a physical environment that's conducive to sleep. One of the common tips suggested by sleep experts is to designate your bedroom for sleeping only—that means no television and definitely no laptop or smart phone use. This way, when you get into bed, your body is conditioned to know that it's time for sleep. On a more practical level, make sure your comfort is a priority: keep the room cool; keep the room dark; use ear plugs or a white-noise machine if you live somewhere noisy; and, if you share a bed, consider getting your own set of blankets, eliminating any nocturnal tugs of war.

## Ad lib if necessary

What should you do if you wake up in the middle of the night? Don't worry—you're sleeping like your ancestors did. Research shows that until the 1800s, people generally went to bed near sunset, slept for three or four hours, then woke up and stayed awake for two to three hours before falling asleep again and waking at dawn. Modern experiments in which subjects were kept in the dark for fourteen hours naturally reverted to the same pattern of first and second sleep.

The "two sleeps" theory shows that though sleep is important, there isn't necessarily one correct way to achieve your needed shut-eye. You might find that an afternoon nap (if you have a flexible schedule that allows it) is easier for you than an uninterrupted eight hours at night.

As knitters, we've all had the experience of saying "Just one more row" on a great project and then, half a sleeve (and several hours) later, finally falling asleep. But as Dr. Breus says, "Make sleep a priority, and you will have sweet dreams about your bottom line."

.....  
**Claire Lui** has a toddler at home and tries to knit (and sleep) while her daughter is napping. She blogs at [newyorkminknit.com](http://newyorkminknit.com).

## Tips for Satisfying Slumber

**1. Keep a regular schedule:** "People fall asleep and stay asleep better when they set regular schedules and sleep-related routines. That means going to bed at the same time every night of the week and weekend," says Lauren Hale, an associate professor of preventive medicine at Stony Brook University in New York.

**2. Follow the sun:** Our bodies want to rise and set with the sun, but electric light and various gadgets keep us up well past sundown. "Given the convenience of technology and the constant demands of running a business, it can be all too easy to take laptops or smartphones into the bedroom," says John T. Peachey, Behavioral Sleep Medicine Fellow at Stanford University School of Medicine. "Televisions, computers and electronic devices often put out blue light that can alter the body's internal clock (i.e., circadian rhythm), which makes it more difficult to fall asleep. Therefore, I often encourage people to create a 'buffer zone' or time to unwind and relax for at least one hour prior to bedtime." Consider dimming your screen as the day goes on and don't fall asleep in bed with your iPhone or laptop.

**3. Journaling:** If you're up at night worried about work, try old-fashioned journaling. Jot down your worries in a notebook (not a computer). It sounds simple, but a "worry journal" is an effective way to help clear your mind of a jam-packed to-do list as you attempt slumber.

**4. Triad of health:** Everyone knows that diet and exercise are the bedrocks of a healthy life, but sleep is an equally important factor in the equation. Cut out caffeine (at least in the four to six hours before bedtime), eat better and exercise regularly, and you'll start sleeping better. Once you start sleeping better, you'll find your health will improve across the board and you'll have more energy to exercise more. It's a virtuous circle, once you get back on track.



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# Knit One, Crochet Too

## Windham, Maine

BY DARYL BROWER

**W**hy choose to run a yarn company? For Hélène Rush, current owner of Knit One, Crochet Too, the answer is fairly straightforward. “It was the one thing I hadn’t done yet,” she says. Rush, who purchased the yarn division of parent company K1C2 in 2003, had done just about everything else in the yarn industry. She was an independent designer (she sold her first pattern in 1979), a knitting magazine editor (for *McCall’s Needlework* and *Cast-On*) and author of five books. Outside the knitting world, she had stints as both a web designer and a marketing manager for a decorative accessories company.

The opportunity to buy into the yarn business resulted from an offhand remark Rush made to Gloria Tracy, co-founder of K1C2 with Susan Levin, whom Rush knew from her days at *McCall’s Needlework*. “Gloria mentioned to me that she and Susan were selling their yarn division, and I said, ‘Oh, I wish I’d known; I would have been interested.’” A few weeks later, Tracy called to say that the original deal to sell had fallen through. “She asked me, ‘Were you serious?’ And I had to think, ‘Well, am I?’” The answer, she decided, was yes. “Money was the scary part,” Rush says. “I was confident I could do the rest.”



It helped that the knitting boom was in full swing when Rush took over the company in the early aughts. “It was the height of the scarf craze,” she recalls. “You could offer steel wool and people would buy it.” But even after the craft took a cyclical dip, with yarn shops closing and manufacturers’ sales lagging, Knit One, Crochet Too’s business stayed strong, something Rush credits to the wide selection of yarns the company carries, the incredible pattern support it offers and the dedicated, service-oriented team she has working for her.

Let’s start with the yarns. There were 29 at last count, in a large assortment of colors, fibers and textures. Wool, alpaca, silk, cash-

mere, bamboo, soy and cotton are all part of the mix, though Rush says she focuses less on the fiber content and more on how the yarn “feels, looks and knits,” much as she would the yarns in her personal stash.

“I buy what I like and try to avoid the fads,” she says. “If we’re going to add a yarn, it has to be something that’s different from what’s already in the line. We create inspiration with colors and innovative patterns.” And there are a lot of patterns—25 per season. “I’m an overachiever that way,” Rush admits. “But pattern support is important. You need to give people suggestions for what to do with the yarns.”

tern support is important. You need to give people suggestions for what to do with the yarns.”



You also need to create connections with customers—both wholesale and retail—which is something Rush and her crew work hard at. “We have a great team,” she says. “Everyone who works here is a super personality, and they’re positive and proactive about helping our customers.” They’ve also been with Rush from day one, a sure sign that they love what they’re doing. “It translates into great support for our customers,” she says.

That support extends into the virtual world. Along with the usual photos and descriptions of yarns and patterns, the company’s website features a blog and podcasts, plus videos featuring product information, project how-tos and fashion shows. Retail customers can place orders online and have them fulfilled by their local yarn shops (the site locates the closest store), a partnership that benefits all parties involved. Knit One, Crochet Too also has a strong presence on Facebook and Ravelry, outlets Rush intends to devote even more attention to. “It’s a wonderful way to connect with the end customer—and it’s something we’d like expand,” she says of social media. “Marketing is just so important,” she muses. “Our great industry has so much to share.”

### What’s in a name?

Rush is quick to point out that Knit One, Crochet Too and K1C2 are two separate entities. K1C2, founded in California in 1996 by Gloria Tracy and Susan Levin, made waves with innovative knitting notions like the Yarn Bra, MagniClips and the Rainbow Pick Point and Match color selector. A yarn and pattern division, Knit One, Crochet Too, was added in 1999. Knit One, Crochet Too became a separate company when Rush purchased it and moved it to Maine in 2003. Levin continues to produce products for craft companies under the K1C2 license. (Tracy left the partnership in 2008 to pursue her teaching and design interests.)

### Snapshot

#### Knit One, Crochet Too

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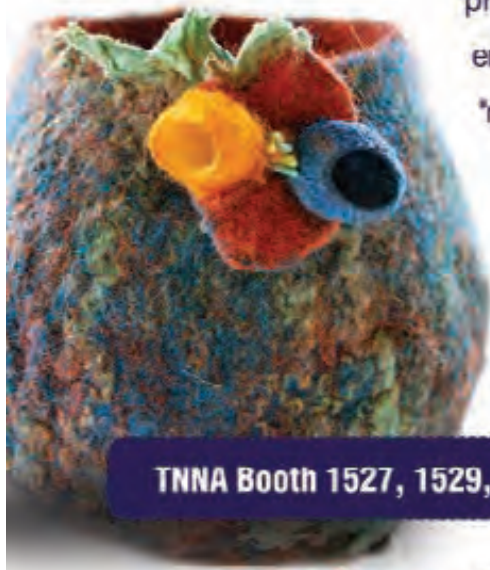
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# The Faroe Islands

Knitters keep tradition alive and keep warm on “the Sheep Islands.”

BY JESSICA LONDON KLEMZ

Situated halfway between Norway and Iceland, the Faroe Islands are an isolated gem. Sturdy roads, tunnels and ferries connect this pristine, rugged group of 18 islands. It's said that “wool is the gold of the Faroes”—sheep's wool, that is, prized for its warmth and water-repellent properties in a rainy, windy land where average temperatures hover between 37 to 52 degrees Fahrenheit. The landscape is punctuated by the bold primary colors of buildings and boats, the green turf roofs and the restful symmetry of black and white houses. The Faroe Islands are a welcome respite, a place where it's easy to shed technology, enjoy simple pleasures, and dig deep into an established knitting heritage.

The knitting scene in the Faroe Islands is guaranteed to evoke a wellspring of pattern ideas—traveling with a sketchbook is recommended. For inspiration, look no further than the streets of capital city Tórshavn, where heavy sweaters are needed even in the summer. Begin at the tourist information office (Vaglið 4) to pick up a map, then step into HNJ bookstore to explore the knitting books, particularly the perfectly named *Knitting in the Faroe Islands: HNJ's Indispensable Guide to the Faroe Islands* by Jóhanna av Steinum.

Continue on to various yarn shops around town. Igloo (Sverrisgøta 19) stocks Faroese yarn as well as goods from around the globe, with terrific selections and helpful service. Owner Jansy Simonsen is at the ready to help knitters find the perfect yarn for their Faroese-inspired projects. Snældon (Niels Finsensgøta 25), known for machine-knit items (from its own mill) worked in traditional Faroese patterns, is also a resource for natural and dyed yarns, garments and notions. This is the place to find Snældon sweaters, stranded pieces featuring smaller repeating Faroese patterns. Sirri (Árvegur 10) offers a mix of sweaters and woolen garments sure to appeal to both men and women. Sirri also retails its signature yarn, made from 100 percent Faroese wool, and a branded knitting pattern book. Navia, a yarn and knitwear company based in the Faroese village of Toftir, has a retail location conveniently located at the SMS shopping mall (á Trapputrøðni). A wall of Navia yarn, notions, finished goods and Navia's signature patterns await lucky knitters. For those who don't read Faroese, look to the U.K.'s Island Wool Company website, where Fiona Parker translates Navia's patterns (as well as Sirri's) into English.

You're likely to spot many examples of modern Faroese patterns in the sweaters by local designers Guðrun and Guðrun (Niels Finsensgøta 13). One of their most popular designs is the “Sarah Lund sweater,” named for jumpers worn by the main character on the Danish television series *Forbrydelsen* (remade in English as *The Killing*). It is characterized by swathes of Faroese patterning on a solid background.

Daniel Rye of Island Wool Company (islandwool.co.uk) says the islands' landscape has a direct influence on local knitwear design. “The contrast of vivid colors with the traditional undyed natural shades of Faroese yarn is a familiar formula today. It is easy to see these themes in the Faroese landscape: the horizontal ridges of dark gray basalt against the green mountains, the brightly colored houses contrasting with the brown grassy slopes of the autumn hillsides. There are the other textures, too: of fishing nets, bird's feathers, storm

clouds and the ever-present Atlantic Ocean.”

Faroese sheep live and graze independently in small flocks. When it's time to round up the sheep, Rye notes, “the outer fleece tends to almost fall off the sheep, but most shearing today is still done with traditional hand shears.” The characteristics of the wool include soft under-fibers and longer outer fibers creating, according to Rye, “a fleece that combines softness, warmth and weatherproof strength.”

The largest summer festival held in Tórshavn each July, St. Olav's

Day, is the best opportunity to appreciate Faroese knitting and textile heritage. Traditional hand knits are worn during the festival, including stranded sweaters, socks, caps, lace cuffs and the celebrated Faroese shawl. Known for their center gusset and shoulder shaping, designed to anchor them to the body in windy conditions, Faroese shawls are typically made from natural, undyed yarn and include lace patterning. Elegant color combinations in cottons, satins and silks, including handworked embroidery, silver buttons and brooches of all designs, make each outfit unique.

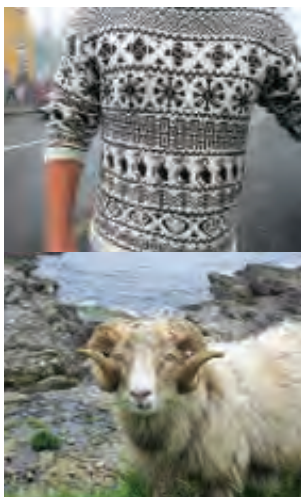
The knitting skills of the typical Faroese woman are considered expert, because a majority of them have been knitting since childhood. Historically, women on the island knit to produce exports and for necessity. It used to be that women did not knit on Sundays or holidays because knitting was considered work, according to Oddvør Jacobsen (oddvor.blogspot.com), designer for Navia (navia.fo). Traditional designs were rarely written down, but this did not pose a problem: Knitters simply made up new patterns. Today, passion for knitting is shared through knitting clubs—women may belong to one or more *bindeklubb*, often meeting weekly. Knitting clubs are formed through affiliations at work, in neighborhoods or through friends. Unlike American yarn shops with open knitting nights, knitting clubs are private, with membership extended by invitation. Often the experience of knitting together involves tea and delicious cakes or socializing over a shared dinner.

Even if one is not a passionate knitter—or even a knitter at all—the beauty and heritage of Faroese knitting is a strong draw. In Tórshavn, a women's collective sells handmade items at Foroya Heimavarkis Felag (currently located near the town center). From shawls to socks and everything in between, traditional Faroese knits are available, making it tough to leave the islands without a hand-knit item (or two) to remember the journey.

Jessica London Klemz is an Indiana-based business consultant and writer.



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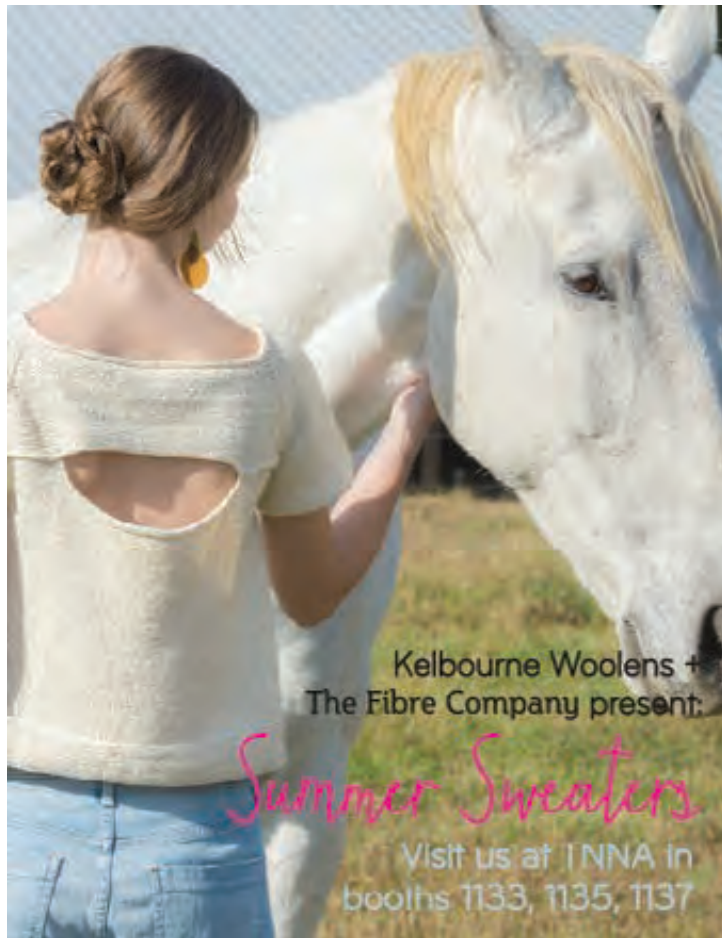
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KNITTING TO GO

# Unwind *with a knitting* Vacation

BY LESLIE PETROVSKI



Knitting is on the move, literally. While there is nothing new about knitters and crocheters taking to the road to attend fiber festivals or participate in retreats, the growth in the number and variety of fiber-related vacations is astounding. Get into your armchair, traveler, and dream about this: Studying Icelandic knitting with Ysolda Teague and Ragga Eiríksdóttir in Reykjavik and Iceland's Snæfellsnes peninsula—during lambing season. Touring Aberdeen, Glasgow, Shetland, Orkney and the Outer Hebrides and taking workshops from the Shetland Guild of Spinners, Weavers & Dyers. Cruising from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Seward, Alaska, with Ann Budd, visiting the famous Oomingmak Cooperative (owned by Native Alaskan women who create hand knits from qiviut), touring a musk-ox farm and more. Joining a local yarn shop like Asheville, North Carolina's Friends and Fiberworks for a knitting cruise to St. Thomas, St. Maarten and the Bahamas while taking classes in spinning, needle felting, weaving, dyeing, felting, knitting, crochet, tatting and nuno felting.

## The New Tourism

Travel experts have for years identified education and enrichment vacations as a key trend among travelers, especially as the recent "technology detox" phenomenon—whereby people make it a point to step away from smartphones, laptops and other devices—becomes more popular.

"I see it growing," says Melissa Gower-Pence, owner of Craft

Cruises in Steamboat, Colorado, of knitting-themed vacations. "Enrichment travel is one of the faster growing segments, along with multigenerational travel and singles."

"Our cruise business is up 50 percent over the past year," observes Mara Hargather, owner of Cruise One Hargather, Thaler and Associates. "In 20 years, this is our best year ever. If you combine something people like to do, like knitting or quilting, with something that's exploding, like cruising, it's a win-win for everybody."

Driving some of this growth is demographics. According to the Pew Research Center, 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 every day.

For knitters, a trip to Shetland or to see the fjords—and Dale of Norway—may be a bucket-list adventure.

"We have people who have been getting our newsletter for five or six years, and their desire is to get back to what they love," Gower-Pence explains. "They've worked their whole lives and done for others, and now they want to travel. You can tell where someone is in his or her life when they say, 'Book it!' They've been thinking about [taking a trip] for years."

A veteran of the cruise industry, Gower-Pence started organizing knitting-themed cruises in 1999 after attending Stitches West with her mother. Struck by the number of people who flew in to spend days in a convention center, she wondered, Why not do something similar on the high seas?

She started her business as a hobby, planning one-off trips, first to Alaska, then New England, then the Baltic. In 2007 she quit her full-time job to focus on Craft Cruises; since then, she says, business has doubled every year and now is expanding to include literary cruises, cooking cruises and land-based trips. In 2014, knitters can take a Craft Cruise with expert knitting instructors to locations as varied as Antarctica (a trip that includes excursions to the Buenos Aires yarn district and visits to Manos del Uruguay and Malabrigo), Burgundy and Provence, the Baltic (Denmark, Estonia, Russia, Finland, Sweden and Germany) and even Hawaii.

## The Journey and the Destination

Knitting tourism isn't limited to cruising. *Vogue Knitting* has hosted tours for years and in 2013 mounted two adventures: Scotland and Iceland (with guest appearances by Ysolda Teague, Kate Davies and Di Gilpin and a trip to the Lopi factory) and England and Wales (with workshops

by Sarah Hatton, Martin Storey, Sasha Kagan and Colinette, plus the opportunity to take in the legendary Knitting and Stitching Show at the Alexandra Palace in London). Both trips sold out.

Canadian Joyce James has run knitting-themed trips since 1996. In 2014, she's offering two land-based vacations to Wales, with visits to handcrafters, designers and mills, and her sixteenth tour to Scotland. There's also a Viking Route sea cruise scheduled that starts in Norway, stopping at Leith, Orkney, Shetland, Skye, Iona, the Faroes and Iceland. Rather than hire celebrity teachers to accompany travelers, James engages local instructors who share their knitting secrets and cultures.

"What I've found is that [bringing in on-site experts] ups the value of the tour for everybody," she explains. "The groups enjoy talking to the locals."

And what vacation would be complete without souvenirs? Typically, knitting vacations include shopping of one sort or another. In some cases, shopping is destination-oriented and can involve a visit to an iconic yarn shop like Churchmouse Yarns & Teas on Bainbridge Island, Washington, a regular stop on Craft Cruises Alaska trips, or the studios of local dyers, spinners and other artisans.

Three years ago Leslye Solomon, who owns Woolstock Yarn Shop in Glyndon, Maryland, taught on a Craft Cruise jaunt to New England and Canada that offered stops at local yarn shops, dyers and spinners. "I own a yarn shop," she says. "Did I buy yarn? Of course."

**Education and enrichment vacations are a key trend among travelers, especially as the recent "technology detox" phenomenon becomes more popular.**

## Making Your Connections

Barry Klein, co-owner of Trendsetter Yarns, started teaching arts and crafts on cruise ships 30 years ago. These days he teaches on one to three cruises a year; instead of receiving a teaching fee, he partners with a retail yarn shop to set up a floating fiber emporium of Trendsetter products right on board.

"I'm there to help people with fit and to adjust instructions and to play with colors. It's a week-long custom-knit fest," he says. "You normally can't get access to a company's entire product line, but it's all right there for them."

At A Good Yarn in Sarasota, Florida, customers had been nudging owner Susan Post to do some sort of retreat. Encouraged by author Melissa Leapman, who had been teaching at the shop, Post decided to organize A Good Cruise. "It seemed like the thing to do," Post says. "There's so much excitement. It's more than halfway sold out and it's not happening until April."

Post is tentatively capping the trip at 75 knitters and estimates that between 40 and 45 have already committed. The cruise, which runs from April 7–12, features classes by Leapman and teachers from the shop, a goody bag, a special cruise-only knit-along featuring a custom pattern by Shibui and a floating shop stocked with ChiaGoo tools the company is consigning for the trip, Shibui yarn and yarns from Claudia Hand Paints (with a special-edition colorway dyed just for cruisers).

"It's fed off itself," she says. "People are saying, 'OK, I'm going to go, too.' There are still a few people on the fence, but when our snowbirds are back, I'm confident it will sell out."

In 2013, Lisa Mackey, owner of Friends and Fiberworks, ran the shop's first cruise, working with cruise specialist Mara Hargather, who has started calling herself the "go-to person for knitting cruises." Hargather handles cruise logistics and even helped connect Friends and Fiberworks with sponsor Malabrigo.

"I promote it and they [the shop and Malabrigo] promote it," Hargather explains. "A lady called yesterday—she had Googled 'knitting cruises' and saw the Friends and Fiberworks cruise and another one. She couldn't decide between the two, so she booked both. That kind of enthusiasm is really exciting."

(continued on page 50)

(continued from page 49)

The recent Friends and Fiberworks cruise gave not only 41 fiber fans the opportunity to get away from it all but Mackey as well, who balances the shop with her job as secretary to a middle school principal. Though she was constantly on-duty, making sure her floating shop had everything necessary to support shipboard classes, she loved the trip.

"It seemed like everywhere I went, someone was doing something fun: knitting, spinning, doing hairpin lace," Mackey says of the shop's inaugural cruise. "Everyone was very connected. [Even cruise director Hargather, who has been planning knitting cruises for several years, finally took the time to learn to knit.] It was very nice for me—my vacation from both jobs."

The multicraftual excursion went swimmingly—so well, in fact, that another is on the books for 2014. "We already have quite a few signed up who went on the last cruise," Mackey says. "Some people committed even before they got off the ship." But instead of a five-day trip, this year's cruise will run for seven. And she'll take about a third as many instructors as she did in 2013.

Shops can make money on cruises in myriad ways. The floating shop can be a good source of revenue—Mackey estimates that their shop took in about \$1,000 over the course of their first cruise. "I couldn't believe how many needles we sold," she says. Plus, registration fees and classes can be extras that add to the bottom line.

"As a store owner, the best thing you can do is create interest on a regular basis," Barry Klein observes. "An annual cruise is a great way to find customers from outside your local territory and create an online identity and get out of your own world. Shop owners spend a week with all my sweaters and my yarn, and they feel a renewed interest in Trendsetter and in what we do. And when you have 70 people and 30 of them bought the same sweater, you'll do it as a model for your store and watch it create a brand-new energy."



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[friendsandfiberworks.com](http://friendsandfiberworks.com)

A Good Cruise to the Caribbean

April 7–12, 2014

[agoodyarnsarasota.com/cruise](http://agoodyarnsarasota.com/cruise)

Nicky Epstein in Spain

May 1–10, 2014

[travelingtogether.net/nickyknits.htm](http://travelingtogether.net/nickyknits.htm)

Ireland with Maggie Jackson

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[travelingtogether.net/maggiknits](http://travelingtogether.net/maggiknits)

Knit France 2 with Nancy Marchant

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[jeanmoss.com/knit\\_france3.html](http://jeanmoss.com/knit_france3.html)

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[joycejamestours.com](http://joycejamestours.com)

Baltic Knitting Cruise with Galina Khmeleva  
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The Knittenger Bag

# Minding the Store

How secure is your store?  
We've rounded up a few key  
tips and practices to keep you  
and your shop safe.

BY DARYL BROWER

**Yarn,** for the most part, is a warm and fuzzy business. We surround ourselves with gorgeous color and texture, inspire and encourage creativity in our customers and generally think the best of those who walk through our doors. But you're not doing yourself any favors by looking at your shop through a haze of rose-colored mohair. Yes, the jewelry shop two doors down may be a more enticing target than a shop filled with yarn, but even in the best of neighborhoods merchandise goes missing, employees aren't always honest and vandals strike. Luckily, there are ways to protect yourself. We've put together an at-a-glance guide to keeping your store safe, along with some advice from retailers\* who've taken steps to secure their stores.

## Space Invaders

According to *Bloomberg Businessweek*, a mind-boggling \$37 billion worth of merchandise is stolen from retailers each year. That's about 550,000 shoplifting incidents per day. But you don't need high-tech surveillance systems or undercover security to reduce the likelihood that customers will resort to the dreaded five-finger discount. One of the simplest, most straightforward ways to combat theft is by laying out your space in a manner that deters it.

- **Stop short.** While it may be tempting to use as much vertical space as you can, any shelving that's not set up against the walls should be kept to a height you can see over. Otherwise, it provides prime cover for those seeking to smuggle out merchandise. Ditto for displays—don't allow them to create corners that put customers out of sight.
- **Straighten up.** A cluttered shop is an invitation to shoplifters. If everything's a tangled mess, a dishonest customer (or employee) figures you won't notice if something goes missing. Keeping tabs on stock is much easier when everything is neat and ordered, and it sends a message to customers and staff that you care about your inventory and know where everything is.
- **Mind the doors.** Piles of merchandise set near the entrance or exit are tempting targets for thieves. It's simply too easy to scoop something up on the way out. If you are setting up a display near a doorway, take extra precautions by pinning, tying or otherwise securing sweaters, shawls and the like to the display fixture.
- **Sweat the small stuff.** Keep easily concealed items (stitch markers, needles, buttons) next to the register or behind glass in a cabinet or counter. Another option is to set out sample needles and hooks and keep the bulk of the stock behind the register.
- **Register this.** Don't set your cash wrap at the back of the store. Instead, position it so customers have to pass by it (and whoever's staffing it) before exiting the shop. Don't let large amounts of cash pile up in the register during the day. Keep just enough in the drawer to make change, and secure the extra cash in a safe or locked office until you can make a bank deposit. Some retailers take the step of leaving the register drawer open after closing up shop; that way anyone who enters the building can see that there's no cash to be had.
- **Be present.** Security experts say that having at least two salespeople on the floor at all times is one of the best deterrents to would-be thieves. And that means actively walking the floor, not reading a book behind the register. Train your staff to approach and acknowledge everyone who comes into the shop—remember, thieves want to go unseen and unnoticed.

## All by Yourself

For many LYS owners, staffing up just isn't an option. So what's a retailer to do? For starters, keep yourself front and center as much as possible. Yes, you need to place orders, do paperwork and complete other tasks, but if you must do them during business hours, get them done at the register (where customers can see you and you can see them) rather than in your office. Security mirrors can help you keep an eye on things and are a tactic E., an Oregon LYSO, employs. "It's more of a deterrent than anything else," she says of the mirrors. "But every little bit helps."

Working alone can also leave you with a sense of vulnerability. If trouble should walk in the door, who's around to help? After an unnerving encounter with a homeless person who wandered into her shop, E. decided to take action. "Nothing happened," she says of the incident, "but it was enough to convince me that I needed a backup plan if I'm going to be here on my own." A year ago she invested in an alarm system with a remote-controlled panic button that allows her to notify the police in case of an emergency. "I've never used it, but I like knowing that it's here," she says.

## Unwelcome Visitors

Nestled in a bustling downtown, S.'s Virginia shop welcomes customers to sit and stitch. One afternoon, a disheveled-looking man wandered in, sat himself down and proceeded to make S. and her customers very uncomfortable. "He reeked of alcohol, cigarettes and urine," S. explains. "And he kept telling us he was carrying a pocket knife."

S. had made a point of fostering good relations with local law enforcement, introducing herself to the beat cop on her block and taking time out to talk to him when he passed by. So she decided to enlist his help. "I called and asked him to just stand by while I asked the guy to leave. There was no big scene—I tried to be as quiet as possible so as not to embarrass the man. I felt so much better knowing the police officer was there just in case." So what should you do if the police aren't there? First, stay calm. Speaking quietly but firmly, inform the customer that he should leave immediately. Keep it short and sweet and don't let the situation escalate into a shouting match. If the person refuses to leave, inform him that you have no choice but to call the police. Usually that's enough to entice the offending party to vacate the premises.

## Personal Protection

Merchandise on the store shelves isn't the only thing that needs securing. Personal items belonging to staff are also vulnerable to theft. That's a lesson J., a shop owner in New Jersey, learned last spring. She'd left her iPhone on the register counter and stepped away to help a customer. In that short time, two young girls walked into the shop, grabbed the phone and dashed back out onto the street.

"Honestly, I couldn't believe it," J. says. "I kept trying to convince myself that I'd simply misplaced it." But the



girls'

behavior was a tip-off.

"They walked straight to the register and then walked right back out," she says.

"No one does that." She's certain theft wasn't

the intention when the two came into the shop; it's just

that an easy opportunity presented itself. Luckily a security camera installed by her landlord made it fairly simple—if time-consuming—to identify the perpetrators and to recover the phone. "I had to spend a few hours looking through the videos, but we were able to identify the girls," she says.

J. admits that she could have taken better precautions. "It was stupid of me to leave the phone out in the open," she admits. "But this is a small, safe town where pretty much everyone knows everyone, and you just don't think that sort of thing will happen." That sense of small-town safety is something many retailers interviewed for this article echoed, but it leaves your shop—and your staff—open to crimes of opportunity.

Safeguard your belongings and those of your employees by providing a secure spot for handbags, wallets and other essentials. Lockers by the back entrance, cubbies in the office or even a locked drawer behind the register are simple ways to keep belongings safe while your staff is on duty. J. has since taken to locking bags and wallets in her office and keeping her phone either in her pocket or out of sight in a drawer (continued on page 54)

behind the register, a practice every retailer should follow.

## Vandalism and Other Crimes of Opportunity

Stealing isn't the only security measure stores have to deal with. When P. arrived at her Georgia store one spring morning, she was greeted by the sight of a shattered glass door. Inside she found puddles of water and a ruined wood floor, courtesy of vandals who thought it would be fun to flood her shop's interior. "They kicked in the glass door, stuck a hose through the opening and turned the water on full force," she explains. The crime was simply one of opportunity—college kids looking for kicks on a Friday night, most likely. "Mine was the only store in the area that was vulnerable," P. says, "with easy entry through the glass and no cameras to capture who did it."

The lack of camera footage and witnesses also left the local police fairly uninterested in pursuing the offenders. "They pretty much told me there was nothing they could do about it," P. laments. She installed cameras on both her front and back doors, which has provided her with a little more peace of mind and the confidence that she could better pursue a case with law enforcement should something happen again. "There hasn't been an incident since," she says. "And I expect that if [the vandals] thought they were going to be seen, they wouldn't have done it."

The majority of those who walk into your store are there to revel in the gorgeous fibers you're carrying, not plot ways to carry them—or your register—off. But being aware of the risks and putting practices in place to prevent problems makes your store a safer and more pleasant place for everyone.

## Inside Jobs

It's a hard fact to hear, but according to the National Retail Federation, 60 percent of inventory losses are the result of theft or embezzlement by employees. U.S. retailers and small businesses lost \$33 billion in revenue last year due to theft, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that 75 percent of employees steal from work—repeatedly. This shouldn't make you paranoid about your staff, but it should inspire you to take a few precautions to alleviate the chances of being a victim of employee theft.

- **Start smart.** Making the right hiring decisions from the start can help safeguard your store. Ask for references and check them before making a job offer. The U.S. Small Business Administration offers a basic guide to background checks on their website outlining the laws governing their use. (Note that these vary from state to state.)
- **Be proactive.** Establish good practices for keeping tabs on your stock and the register. Do regular inventories, don't allow employees to ring up their own purchases (a manager or another employee should do it for them), require a second signature on returns and have more than one person check in deliveries of yarn, books and sample garments.
- **Double up.** Employees will be much less tempted to steal if they know there's a check in place on financial transactions. If you entrust staffers to handle deposits, send them to the bank in pairs, have two employees count out the register at closing or between shift changes and keep two salespeople on the floor at all times.
- **Cultivate caring.** Give your staff a stake in your shop. Solicit input about displays, inventory, class offerings—things that will help them feel their opinions are valued. Staffers who believe they're underpaid, overworked or generally treated unfairly often feel justified in stealing or in overlooking the dishonesty of fellow employees. Let them know they are trusted and that you are counting on them to help make your shop a success.

## Ten Tips for a Safer Workplace

- 1. Light the way.** Are your shop entrances (including the stockroom and any back or side entrances) well-lit? Illuminating these areas, as well as leaving a few low-level interior lights on, makes it easier for police to see what's going on inside your shop after hours.
- 2. Construction details.** A sturdy structure, strong doors and alarmed windows will make it harder for thieves and vandals to gain entry to your shop. A reinforced door kept K.'s stock safe when a would-be thief tried to pry open the door of her Hawaii shop. The shop across the hall wasn't so lucky. "She's been robbed twice," K. says.
- 3. Lock up.** External doors and windows should be solidly constructed; if they're not, ask your landlord about reinforcing them. Use deadbolts and make sure all doors and windows are locked when you close up for the night. If you are lucky enough to have skylights, make sure they're secure as well.
- 4. Take your time.** Consider keeping hours that are in tune with local foot traffic, especially if you must mind the shop by yourself. K.'s landlord began locking the street-level doors at 7 P.M. (when workers in the neighboring office buildings have cleared out), and K. made the decision not to stay open past that time.
- 5. Identify yourself.** Make a practice of recording the make, model and serial numbers of high-ticket items like computers, printers and photocopyers and photograph other items of value (display pieces, sample garments, etc.)—snapping photos with your smartphone or camera is a quick and easy way to make a visual record of your valuables. Doing so will make filing a police report easier in the event of theft or damage and help you sort out claims with your insurance company.
- 6. Call for help.** Preprogramming your phone with emergency numbers (police, fire, etc.) will keep you from fumbling in a crisis. If your store phone is tied to your alarm system (and most are), make sure the line is installed in such a way that it is difficult to tamper with. Underground wires are the easiest to protect, as you can easily cover the incoming wires with conduit and install extra protection around the gang box. Companies like Linesafe provide reinforcement for all types of phone lines. Many alarm systems also offer cellular backup.
- 7. Smile for the camera.** Cameras pointed at the access points to your shop can be a big deterrent to would-be thieves and vandals. Most would prefer not to take the

chance of being seen. If they do strike, you'll have a better chance of identifying the culprits.

- 8. Raise the alarm.** Installing an alarm system can be costly, but it will provide peace of mind. If such a service is out of your budget, consider posting stickers or signs that claim the premises are alarmed or install cameras that are for show only. L. in Texas decided not to up the contract for the security service that served the previous tenant in her shop space but did leave the "burglar box" from that system in place. "It's not connected to anything, but I figure anyone who sees it will probably think twice before swiping something," she says.
- 9. Meet and greet.** Experts say the number one thing you can do to prevent shoplifting is to acknowledge and approach everyone who walks through the door. Saying "Hello, how can I help you?" isn't just good customer service; it also lets would-be shoplifters know that you've seen them come in and know where they are.
- 10. Speak up.** Create a code word for employees to use when they suspect a customer may be up to no good. It will alert everyone in the shop to the problem, and you can keep an eye on the situation. Approaching the customer and asking "May I hold that at the register for you?" or "Would you like me to ring you up now?" will also help thwart theft.

## How to Spot a Shoplifter

- **Is he spending more time watching the cashier or sales clerk than fondling the yarn or drooling over patterns? He may be looking for an opportunity to pocket merchandise.**
- **Is she dressed for the weather? Someone wearing a bulky coat or oversized sweatshirt on a warm day may be using the copious space underneath to stash unpaid-for merchandise.**
- **Does he seem nervous? Shoppers who pick up and put down items with seemingly little interest are likely waiting for an opportunity to slip something into their pockets.**
- **Does she frequent the store often without making a purchase? She may be staking out the shop to see when it's most crowded or when staff is scarce or distracted.**

# new & knittable



## Briggs & Little

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**Soie et Lin** is a rustic blend of silk, linen and polyamide. This slightly textured yarn has lots of character, is incredibly soft and comes in seven rich tweedy colors. (800) 357-7646; [knitonecrochettoo.com](http://knitonecrochettoo.com)



## Mango Moon

**Hakkespelt** is Dale Garn's gorgeous new multitone yarn for socks and so much more. A super-wash wool blend for softness, durability and easy care, each

generous 150g ball contains 426 yards. Distributed in the U.S. and Canada by Mango Moon. (855) 9MM-DALE; [mangomoonyarns.com](http://mangomoonyarns.com)



## T&C Imports

The flattering Daisy Hat from Frog Tree Yarns is designed by Leah Thompson in **Pediboo Worsted**, a blend of 80% merino and 20% bamboo available in 40 colors. [frogtreeyarns.com](http://frogtreeyarns.com)



## ChiaoGoo

**Double Point Sets**, available in early 2014: They'll knock your socks off! The **Bamboo Set** includes five 6" bamboo double points (sizes 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5 and 3). The **Stainless Steel Set** includes six 6" stainless steel double points (sizes 0, 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5 and 3). Both sets come with stitch markers, 5" needle gauge and compact fabric case (as shown). [chiaofoo.com](http://chiaofoo.com)

## Show Your Stuff

This special advertising section runs in YMN's January and May issues, which publish just before the annual TNNa trade shows. For details about featuring a new product or yarn in the May 2014 issue, call Doreen Connors at (212) 937-2554 or Rose Ann Pollani at (212) 937-2557.

# Winter Is Coming: Budgeting for Unexpected Expenses

Is your shop ready to weather a storm?  
Handle a slow season?  
Prepare now for what may lie ahead.

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

**Y**ou may not have ominous flocks of ravens to remind you—after all, life isn't a Game of Thrones—but it's always good to remember that eventually, the lean times of winter will indeed come. Whether you call it boom and bust or bull and bear, the economy is constantly moving in cycles, with good times giving way to downturns. As retail expert and YMN Smart Business Conference 2014 speaker Cathy Donovan Wagner of Retail Mavens ([retailmavens.com](http://retailmavens.com)) warns clients, "Cash will get tight. It always does—it is the cyclical nature of retail." Factor in the fear of unexpected events, like a plumbing fiasco or the storm of the century, and pretty soon you're lying awake at night, waiting for disaster to strike.

Don't panic, and don't make the mistake of assuming there's nothing you can do to prepare: The worst thing a small business owner can do is pretend that flush times will last forever. Says Wagner, "I call this the Ostrich Syndrome, because many retailers stick their heads in the sand. The trick is to be prepared."

## Plan for What You Can

A few years ago, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld gave a speech in which he placed future events into categories: "There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. [And] there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know." Rumsfeld's terminology may have prompted howls from late-night talk-show hosts, but his attempt to classify prospective events into those three categories can be a useful exercise. Let's start with the "known knowns."

It's pretty much standard knowledge in the yarn industry that business follows a predictable pattern: LYS sales pick up in the fall and winter, then trail off as warmer weather arrives. Marianne Adams of The Yarn Boutique in Lafayette, California, has seen this pattern over and over in her nine-plus years as a shop owner. "Our slow time starts in March and usually lasts through September," she observes.

Stewart Allen, owner of the Yarn Lounge in Richmond, Virginia, has also seen this cycle repeat itself many times over in the nearly nine years she has been in business. In 2013, she recalls, "spring arrived in early March and our sales slowed right away because people wanted to be outside. Once people get used to the warmer weather they'll come back in, but for the first few weeks [of spring], all we hear are crickets."

Observant shop owners learn to expect a slow weekend when a fiber-related event sets up nearby; for instance, Adams sees a noticeable slowdown in sales in the weeks before a large national knitting show is held near her shop each year. "We hear people talking about saving up for the show," she notes. Allen too experiences a similar slowdown prior to a large fiber festival located within driving distance of her shop.

If you know when business is going to hit a slow spot, plan for it ahead of time. One way is to schedule inventory purchases for your slow season judiciously. "I've found that in spring and summer, demand for sweater knitting among my customers is much, much lower," says Craig Rosenfeld of Philadelphia's Loop. "Cottons and other spring yarns never sell as well as fall yarns. But accessories like shawls and scarves stay strong." Since opening eight years ago, Rosenfeld has adapted his spring yarn orders accordingly, ordering fewer sweater yarns and focusing more on hand-paints and other yarns that continue to move. "It makes more sense for me to focus on selling yarns that do well than to keep trying to sell yarns that don't," he concludes.

While you're planning inventory for sluggish seasons, give some thought to when orders will be delivered. Clare Fullerton of Slip Knot in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, doesn't take delivery of an entire season's

yarn in one fell swoop. "I have it broken out so that deliveries are spaced throughout a season," she says. "Customers are always looking for something new, and that way I don't have to clog up my square footage with, say, super-bulky yarn when the weather is warmer." Increasingly, yarn companies are responding to the LYS owner's desire to bring in new inventory

at a steady pace rather than in one or two massive orders; last fall, for example, Classic Elite Yarns began allowing for orders to be placed monthly rather than just twice a year.

A tried-and-true strategy for off times is to schedule special events to coincide with known seasonal dips. Stewart Allen, aware that her shop's sales floor is especially quiet during the month of July—"it's awfully hot down here, and the fall yarns haven't arrived yet"—participates in a month-long event called "Get Your Knits in Virginia," which in 2013 highlighted more than 20 yarn shops in the area. Participants purchased a knitting bag with a "Get Your Knits" logo, which entitled them to a month-long 15 percent discount on regular-priced yarns. They also became eligible for drawings for prizes and gift certificates when making purchases at specific shops. "The event brings in customers we ordinarily wouldn't see in July," boosting the shop's sales, Allen says.

Even more intimate events can lead to brisk sales of yarn in stock. Myra Rubin of Mount Holly, New Jersey's Woolbearers says, "I might have a designer come in or host a book signing or a yarn tasting—these events can be really successful at pulling people in during slow times." Even casual gatherings attract customers, such as informal knit- and spin-ins favored by Marianne Adams: "During July and August, we encourage people to knit or spin on our front porch." Adams has been pleased with how the gatherings draw customers and help build a sense of community. An unexpected benefit? Sales of spinning-related items such as wheels and fibers have stayed steady during warmer months. Adams learned that "in summer, when knitters are putting down their knitting, spinners are still spinning."

Clare Fullerton opts for an entirely different approach to the summer doldrums. For her, summertime is prep time. She finds that having a wide variety of store samples helps keep sales robust, and so she views summer as "the time God gave shop owners to knit samples for fall." Fullerton makes her summer to-do list even before she starts ordering autumn yarns. "We look at runway shows, Ravelry, magazines and books and make lists of patterns we want to sample for fall. Then we match them up with yarns. When we go to TNNA in January, we have a list of yarns and the samples we plan to knit in them. Unless I have a specific sample item in mind, I don't order the yarn."

Fullerton also uses the slowest weeks of summer to take some time off. "We close for three weeks in August since, quite honestly, business is dead. We use a lot of that time to clean, reorganize, receive fall merchandise and finalize our shop samples, so when we reopen on the Tuesday

(continued on page 58)



## Is SALE a Four-Letter Word?

Conventional wisdom tells retailers that if business is slow, hold a sale. But not everyone agrees that sales—at least the kind in which every item in the shop is discounted—are worth having on a regular basis. Myra Rubin of Woolbearers is reluctant to run too many sales, finding that they "dilute the [perceived] value of your goods." Craig Rosenfeld of Loop agrees. "Too many discounts suggests that nothing in the shop is worth the original price," he notes. Several shop owners expressed concern that scheduling too many sales trains customers to defer purchases, figuring that eventually everything will be discounted. With this in mind, Stewart Allen of the Yarn Lounge offers only one scheduled sale per year, on the shop's "birthday."

If you have too much inventory and not enough cash flow, how do you decide what to put in the sale bin? In her blog, retail expert Cathy Wagner advises dividing products into three categories: thrillers, spillers and fillers. "Thrillers" are the exciting items that sell quickly—they don't need to be discounted to move quickly. The spillers are the mistakes. Wagner advises discounting them by 20 percent. The fillers are solid performers that lack the sizzle to sell quickly, but are good work-horse products. Wagner suggests first focusing a few intensive selling efforts on these yarns before offering them at a discount.

after Labor Day, we're ready with new samples, new yarns, new patterns and a clean shop."

## Prepare for Predictable Perils

When you've finished planning for the seasonal slowdown that inevitably will come, give some thought to the "known unknowns." Every business faces a certain common set of risks—buildings occasionally catch fire, a customer may slip and fall on an icy sidewalk or a hailstorm may damage a plate-glass window. Luckily, business insurance makes planning ahead for these types of events relatively easy. As Marianne Adams of the Yarn Boutique says, "If something major happens, I consider my insurance coverage to be my first line of defense."

There are many different kinds of insurance designed for small businesses, and terminology varies from company to company. You'll want to consider some form of business property insurance, which protects your business's physical assets—computers, furniture and shelving, signage and, of course, all that yarn. While the terms of each policy are different, commercial property insurance tends to protect against financial loss caused by crime, fire, weather and other disasters. Some companies offer supplemental policies or add-ons that replace lost income if your shop is unable to open as the result of a covered event.

A second type of insurance policy to consider is business liability insurance. Liability insurance covers losses caused by accidents, injuries and other claims, often including attorney fees. Many of the larger insurance companies offer special bundles of insurance, called Business Owner Policies, or BOPs, that combine property and liability insurance at a reduced package rate and may offer other options designed for small business owners.

Because policies and coverage can vary so widely, look for reputable insurance companies and shop around to compare rates and coverage. Finding a licensed agent is a must (most states will provide lists). An agent with business expertise or who specializes in commercial insurance is worth her weight in gold; a retail-savvy agent can help you figure out how to select the most economical package of insurance that best meets your shop's needs. The cost of business insurance may be less than you think: Certain types of coverage have annual premiums of less than \$100. (Of course, premiums will vary depending on the type of coverage you choose, your shop's size and history, your location and other factors; it's always best to get individualized price quotes from a licensed agent in your state.)

In addition to appropriate insurance coverage, financial experts advise leaving some wiggle room in your budget in case an unexpected expense arises. Myra Rubin of Woolbearers has followed this sage advice since she first opened her doors nine years ago: "I always have a good-sized reserve that I try not to dip into, so if anything unexpected comes up, I always have the money to handle it."

## You Don't Need a Crystal Ball

By far, the hardest category of expenses to plan for are the "unknown unknowns"—unusual events that are nearly impossible to predict. Some of these events are highly localized and affect only a single shop. Others are more widespread; a natural disaster like 2012's Superstorm Sandy, for instance, struck businesses along the entire eastern seaboard, with

power outages and transportation woes that persisted for weeks, sometimes months. And changes in the national or global economy can seem to descend on shop owners without warning, causing sales to drop precipitously. Unexpected events like these are scary, especially when so many shop owners find their finances too fluid to set aside large sums of money as a buffer against such major unforeseeables.

How can a LYS owner plan for everything from a flash flood to an economic downturn when these events seem to happen so randomly? It's simpler than you think, says retail expert Cathy Wagner. Her experience tells her that the biggest problem for small retailers is that "they don't pay attention to the peaks and valleys of their own monthly sales and get into a cash-flow pickle because of it." So put down that printout of the Consumer Price Index and pick up a printout of your shop's budget. Wagner emphasizes, "You have to forecast your cash flow and review it every month, without fail, so you'll know when the cash-flow crunch is coming and can prepare for it."

Shop owners frequently use software programs, usually tied to POS

systems, to keep track of financial data such as sales figures, expenses and inventory on hand. However, a budget doesn't have to be generated by fancy software to be useful; even writing down numbers in columns on a hand-drawn spreadsheet will work. The critical task is keeping track of what you spend versus what you take in, evaluating how much inventory you have and reviewing these amounts on a regular basis. Wagner urges, "If you really want to end up with more dollars in your pocket, you can't be afraid to look at your numbers."

Myra Rubin reviews expenses and sales figures on a regular basis using QuickBooks. "I consult it just about every day, and I can use it to generate all sorts of data. I can compare today's sales data with the same day the previous year; I can even break down what I sell into categories to see how much, say, alpaca yarn I'm selling." Rubin likes the flexibility of being able to see "in two seconds," as she puts it, exactly what's going on with

her LYS and access data both past and present.

The Yarn Lounge's Stewart Allen agrees. "I can see what my best sellers are and what my slow movers are, and I can see what's selling best this year. Each day, I do an end-of-day report showing how much the shop took in, comparing cash versus credit cards versus gift cards." Even sales tax reports provide important data about your shop's sales: Several LYS owners point out that generating state sales tax forms, as they are required to do on a monthly basis, gives them a regular and ongoing look at the strength of their sales.

Getting a handle on your numbers is only one step, however. Cathy Wagner urges small business owners to set concrete sales objectives. She notes, "An amazingly underutilized strategy is to set a monthly sales goal and gross margin goal and write it down, share it with your staff and update your progress. Provide incentives to your staff for making the goal—shop gift cards, getting to leave early with no loss of pay, Starbucks gift cards. It doesn't have to cost very much. Just be creative."

Slip Knot's Clare Fullerton is an advocate of this approach; she breaks her budget down into daily sales goals. "I add up my costs—my lease is X, paying my staff is Y and my utilities are Z, and so on," she explains. "Then I divide the costs by the number of days we're open." Fullerton knows she has to take in that amount each day the shop is open in order to break even—and exceed that amount in order to make a profit. She agrees that

## Dire Straits

**Cathy Wagner is in the business of consulting retailers on how to improve their profitability and retool their small businesses. She warns retailers of the different ways cash-flow issues can gradually arise, turning a profitable business into a bankrupt one without the retailer realizing until too late how precarious cash flow is. Her website lists some of the warning signs that your cash flow is in critical condition:**

- **More than half of the shop's inventory arrived more than 60 days prior.**
- **Your shop owes federal, state or local back taxes.**
- **Advertising and marketing decisions are governed by cash flow.**
- **You don't change your level of staffing on a monthly basis.**
- **You pay off last season's invoices with this season's income.**

it's important for employees to think about those numbers, too: "My staff all know how to go into QuickBooks and see what we sold last year on a particular date, and how we're doing this year. They're here to help me with my business, and so they need to know those numbers."

## Don't Just Sit There!

By setting goals and monitoring progress, retail owners can avoid going into a downward spiral of diminishing cash flow. The trick is to take action as soon as you perceive a drop in sales. Cathy Wagner tells retailers to act like peacocks: "When you know cash is tight, strut your stuff and boldly address the problem. Work to generate cash."

Clare Fullerton's practice of setting daily sales goals and frequently monitoring progress means she immediately notices any downtick in sales. She knows which days tend to be quieter and which tend to be busiest, taking that information into account when tracking sales. "If Tuesday is slow and Wednesday is slow and I know Thursday is always slow," Fullerton says, "by Friday I'm ready to do an email blast to let people know what's happening in the shop."

Stewart Allen of the Yarn Lounge laughed when this topic was raised: "I just did this a few days ago!" After an early autumn heat wave that slowed sales unexpectedly, Allen ran a "flash sale"—a spontaneous, short-term sale (in her case, 25% off spring/summer yarns for two days only) that she announced on Facebook and Twitter.

These savvy LYS owners have recognized that social media is an extremely economical way to "strut like a peacock" and generate cash. Email blasts can introduce customers to products, remind them of special events like trunk shows, signal hot new arrivals or announce special promotions. Using outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and blogs keeps you on your customers' radar. And don't forget the value of using photographs as teasers; Clare Fullerton notes that a photo of something as seemingly innocuous as a huge cardboard box arriving at the store can pique curiosity and generate foot traffic.

While you're on your laptop or tablet, take advantage of your shop's presence on Ravelry. Marianne Adams, like many LYS owners, has a Ravelry group specifically set up for devotees of her shop. She posts photographs of just-arrived items and lets customers know about brand-new colorways in favorite yarns. "I think some of my colleagues underestimate Ravelry knitters," Adams opines. "They are hard-core, and they knit 12 months of the year."

If things are feeling a bit stale, create excitement by offering something new. Even if you don't have any yarns to introduce, surfing knitting blogs or Ravelry can give you fresh ideas for using up existing inventory. At Slip Knot, sample garments are a reliable way to move yarn, so Clare Fullerton's tried-and-true method for generating sales is knitting up fresh samples. Stewart Allen likes to tweak her class selection during the slower summer season, adding workshops focusing on smaller projects and easier techniques so customers need not commit to multiple sessions. How about a knit-along to generate enthusiasm? Let customers vote online for which project to tackle, post progress photos on your shop's Facebook page, and set up an informal show-and-tell for your next Knit Night.

Thinking creatively about ways to entice customers into your shop is a big help during slower times. Fullerton offers finishing services because they don't require an outlay of cash for inventory. If foot traffic is down, she'll contact customers to remind them that their finishing projects are ready to pick up. "It gets customers in and gives them the chance to see something new. Invariably, they end up buying something."

*Cathy Wagner will be joining Yarn Market News at our annual conference, to be held from March 9–11 in Chicago. She'll draw on her 26 years of experience to help advise attendees about improving cash flow and increasing profits. Learn more about registering for the conference at [yarnmarketnews.com/conferences/2014-chicago](http://yarnmarketnews.com/conferences/2014-chicago).*

# Animal Dreams (continued from page 60)

decisions, veterinary work and crises fall to me.

Of course, I also have this day job, writing books. On an average workday I spend many more hours at my desk, staring into a computer, than outdoors in the sun and rain. When I have serious deadlines, I'm not much of a farmer. But usually for at least some part of the day, something concrete and necessary will call me outside. I like the rhythms of the farm, I enjoy the applied biology, and I love understanding the processes that yield our food and clothes. It's a perfect balance to the cerebral writing life. Instead of driving to the gym, I walk down to the barn to chase an escaped ram, castrate week-old lambs, vaccinate, or deliver twins. It's a fitness plan that will not let me opt out if I'm feeling lazy.

**YMN: Has owning a sheep farm influenced your work? Surely it was a large part of the writing of your latest novel, *Flight Behavior*. Was that the first time you included it in your writing?**

**BK:** Writing teachers always say "write what you know," but that is not meant to be taken very literally. If it were, novels would be boring accounts of commutes, laundry and sorting junk mail. Literary fiction ultimately begins with meaning. The writer has to devise an exciting structure of theme and plot, then set about furnishing it with a backdrop of landscapes and livelihoods. Authenticity is very important. A novel is an immense accumulation of details, all of which have to be accurate and utterly believable. A novel is a fiction, but it's built entirely of little truths. Usually I travel and do lots of research for this phase of the novel, but in the case of *Flight Behavior*, I realized that the landscape and livelihoods I already knew would work nicely. I've always promised my friends and family I would never write about them—because I want them to remain my friends and family! But I've made no such promise to my sheep. I really enjoyed translating the details of this region, and this kind of farm, into poetry and meaning.

**YMN: I know that you and your family are committed to eating locally. How do you see the fiber crafts and industries as part of that effort?**

**BK:** My family enjoys supporting local artists and producers of every kind. It's all the same impulse to support community and celebrate the tastes and textures of our own place. Knitting a jacket or scarf that's entirely solar powered—that grew out of the sunshine and grass of our farm—is a lovely experience, but that's only part of the story. I want to be a more active and informed participant in the processes that bring me my clothing, and that's something anyone can do. Whether it's using local wool or organically grown cotton, or refusing to buy shoes that exploit factory workers, our consumer choices put the world in our hands. Fortunately, the more sustainable choices are usually more aesthetically satisfying as well. I'm excited to see knitters getting more interested in the provenance of their yarns. It's good for the land and culture to think about farmers and appreciate their labor in the many things we consume.

**YMN: What are your favorite kinds of projects to knit?**

**BK:** In a word, bespoke. A lot of hours go into knitting a garment, so I want it to feel really special to the person who wears it, something that could not possibly have come off the rack. I love knitting gloves, because our hands are as uniquely sized and shaped as our feet, and yet we usually settle for "small" or "large." Can you imagine if we bought shoes that way? When I knit a pair of gloves, I draw around the person's hand and make a template for an exact fit. One of my first pairs was made for a beloved friend whose fingers are so extremely long and slender (think shoe size 13 AAA), she'd never in her life owned gloves that really fit. Now she does. That makes me happy.

**YMN: What's on the needles right now?**

**BK:** I just bound off an Estonian lace shawl made with dove gray wool from a favorite lamb, spun to lace-weight and blended with 30 percent angora. I had in mind a soft, warm, very elegant cloud. It's blocking now. And I'm casting on a Pat Olski colorblock vest from the fall issue of *Vogue Knitting*. I'm in a wool-vest mood: We had our first frost last night, a fire in the wood stove this morning—the kind of weather that turns a girl's fancy to knitting.

# Animal Dreams

*She has more than a dozen books to her name—and two dozen or so sheep on her farm. Barbara Kingsolver is more than just a novelist; she's a farmer, knitter and passionate fiber lover. YMN's Erin Slonaker chatted with the revered writer about life on the farm and what's on her needles.*



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID WOOD

**YMN: I must start by asking your origin story as a knitter.**

**BK:** As a rural child I was taught one way or another to knit, crochet, sew and repair clothing, and all the other ordinary skills of home economics. I'm embarrassed to admit, I was impatient with all of it. I always preferred to be outside catching lizards with my brother or hiding somewhere with a notebook, making up improbable stories about faraway places—working with my father in the garden, at the very least. I think I saw the “girlish industries” as confining.

Ironically, it was a confinement that brought knitting back into my life 30 years later. I was laid up for a month under doctor's orders after a mishap, wondering how I could possibly be still for that long. A good friend said, “Try this,” and gave me a pair of bamboo needles and two gorgeous skeins. I've loved knitting ever since. I'm drawn to the calm, meditative rhythms, the sense of creation out of stillness, and the fact that you can manage to be productive anywhere—in a doctor's office or a boring meeting. Contrary to what I first thought, knitting actually gives the knitter a secret freedom.

I'm an ordinary English knitter, and I watch Continental knitters with envy, contemplating a switch. It looks so smooth and fast.

**YMN: Have you passed the skill on to your daughters? Is knitting/yarn part of your legacy?**

**BK:** Both my daughters knit. When they were little, I would ask them to imagine their dream garments, we would design them together, and I would sew or knit them up. My daughter Lily's first bespoke sweater had a lily-of-the-valley motif running up the side with her name blossoming out of it. We're all drawn to knitting and making things by a sense of fun and originality. Instead of rebelling against domestic arts, as I did in girlhood, my daughters—now a teenager and an adult—have a very modern sense of the value of handmade things. When my older daughter married last year, she knit pretty scarves for her bridesmaids. (Her wedding dress was handmade by a cousin.) My girls are definitely career-bound, but they're also good cooks, gardeners and seamstresses, and they understand the power of being able to provide for yourself in concrete material ways. They will never be cold for want of scarves and gloves.

**YMN: You were a biology major. Do you think that has influenced your approach to knitting?**

**BK:** I think my training as a biologist makes me very confident about improvising. Possibly overconfident! Almost from my first sweater I studied the pattern, figured out how the thing was put together and then reorganized it all to my liking. It's only math, after all: It's measurable stitches put together in quantitative ways, so any part of it can be altered, so long as the equations are balanced. I like measurement and experimentation. I adore the chemistry project of dyeing yarn. And I love knitting biological motifs: fractals, leaves, vines. It's no surprise that my favorite designer is Norah Gaughan. I was knitting her patterns for years before I learned that she also studied biology.

**YMN: Tell me about your sheep. What led you to raise Icelandic sheep? Do you process their wool yourself, and what comes of any yarn that is made from their wool?**

**BK:** Sheep are an obvious choice for a fiber lover, of course, but I also have another motive. When I was a kid we raised cattle, which were reasonably docile but big enough to kill me by sheer accident if I didn't keep out of their way. I always wanted to live on a farm and keep animals, but I decided I only want to be in charge of beasts that weigh less than I do. That rules out most of the barnyard. We keep poultry and sheep.

My knowledge and passion for fiber have grown in proportion to my flock. We've had sheep for nine years. I chose Icelandics because they're good producers of both meat and wool. They mature to around 120 pounds or less (see above). They are considered a primitive breed, meaning they haven't been domesticated to such extreme docility that they've forgotten their own survival skills. Our Icelandics are very competent at lambing, good mothers and clever at fending for themselves. They can live solely on pasture, or hay in winter, without supplemental grain.

We'll have anywhere from 10 to 25 lambs each spring, depending on the kind of year we want and the ambition of the ram. In their first fall, we shear the wonderfully soft virgin coat from the lambs and process it separately from the rest of our wool crop. We keep the lambs through one winter, fatten them on grass the following spring and harvest

them at about 16 months. I choose just one or two ewes each year to keep in the breeding flock; all the rest will be enjoyed on someone's table. We don't keep adult rams on the property except for a borrowed one (different each year) during breeding season.

Icelandic fleece has a very long staple and the double coat of long outer fibers called “tog” and softer undercoat, or “thel.” Tog and thel can be separated or spun together to produce any weight of yarn, including the unique Icelandic Lopli. Another asset of the breed is color: Icelandics cover the whole natural end of the spectrum from black, dark and light brown to silver, cream and white. Some are spotted. I have one sheep whose wool, I swear, is pale pink. Her name is Penny, she has a horrible personality, but I kept her for her gorgeous coat, thus disproving what our mothers told us about not expecting to get through life on our looks.

At our October shearing we can get up to 100 pounds of wool. We always have friends show up to help handle the animals and skirt the fleeces. Later I sort, batch and send it to a small mill in Ohio, Morning Star Fiber, that spins it to my specifications. I've made everything from Lopli to lace-weight and had it blended in varying ratios with silk, Tencel, merino, alpaca and angora. I've traded with local alpaca and merino farmers to get my blending fibers. I love experimenting with yarn design, because just about everything turns out lovely. It's just plain fun that our sweaters have names. Beyond our own use and what we give to friends, the meat and yarn go to a local-foods restaurant and arts guild that my husband created in our small town.

**YMN: With this kind of daily life, how do you balance your writing career as well?**

**BK:** It depends on the season and the day. It might be a quiet winter evening with seed catalogs, or the exhausting fun of fall shearing day. Or a meditative hour or two pulling weeds and picking beans in the garden. Or a hectic emergency in the barn, discovering that I need to glove up and deliver a breech lamb in order to save a life. We have steady chores, and surprises. Every marriage has its division of labor, and ours seems to break this way: My husband, Steven, who is also a professor, does more of the routine animal and garden chores, while management (continued on page 59)

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