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Riding on the Sheep's Back



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Cash or Credit?



on our cover

PASTORAL SUMMER

In Australia at the turn of the 20th century, wool was the main source of the country's prosperity—hence the phrase “riding on the sheep's back.” Here's hoping that prosperity will translate to the yarn industry today. These sheep figurines are wrapped in Dale Garn's bouclé, which is actually a blend of 91% alpaca, 7.5% wool and 1.5% nylon (dalegarnnorthamerica.com). Photograph by Marcus Tullis

ATOP OUR SMART COLUMNS

Lorna's Laces' newest line of yarn, Masham Worsted, is a blend of 70% British wool and 30% Masham wool, both of which take colored dyes differently, resulting in subtle variations. www.lornaslaces.net

Recently I stopped at a new artisanal cupcake shop in my neighborhood to try out some of their innovative flavors. I settled on two—bourbon brown butter and pear mascarpone—and pulled out a \$5 bill in anticipation of paying. But since this is Brooklyn, the total for the two was \$6.50. Not having any smaller bills, I handed over a 20. I was met with gruff resistance from the salesclerk, who is also the owner: “I can't break that—I'm out of change. Unless you can come up with \$1.50 exactly or pay with a credit card, you're out of luck.”

I was shocked by the finality of her response but also surprised that by 11 o'clock in the morning the store was already completely out of small bills. It got me thinking about a lot of things, one of them her less than stellar customer service, of course, but more about the issue of cash on hand. These days, when most people are paying with credit cards or, more and more, their phones, what are the protocols for having cash available? Yarn shops certainly serve audiences that are both tech-savvy and still clinging to the old ways, so the question is, Is cash still king? I asked Leslie Petrovski to find out. Read about what she discovered on page 50.

Of course, cash or credit, you're always looking for more of it. But are you also spending your money wisely? We all know that you have to invest in your business to get more out of it, so we researched three professionals you may decide are worth hiring. Daryl Brower spoke with graphic designers, web designers and interior designers—visual artists of a sort who can help update the look of your shop and change the impression your store gives to current and would-be customers. The end results should be more money in your coffers.

We're also looking into other ways you can protect your business and make more money, everything from trademarking your store name (a new concern in this era of online sales) and making kits to move product to adhering to requirements set forth by OSHA. Please let me know if there are particular issues you're facing that you'd like us to write about. You can reach me at erin@yarnmarketnews.com.

A handwritten signature in black ink.

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



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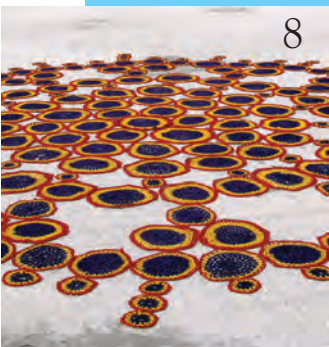
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Going, Going, GONE

Meg Swansen, owner of **Schoolhouse Press**, picked up the phone one day and found knitting legend **Barbara Walker** on the line. "She told me that since she now lives in Florida, she wanted to whittle down her collection of knitted garments. She asked if we'd please help her," says Swansen. Schoolhouse Press quickly organized three online auctions of more than 80 items, all hand-knit by Walker. Bidders found a wide selection, including sweaters, two-piece suits, shawls, purses and tabards; styles and techniques varied from classic garter- and stockinette-stitch garments to more complex pieces like a lace shawl and a full-length mosaic-stitch skirt. Not surprisingly, knitters flocked to bid on the items, and at press time only a handful remained unsold; Swansen plans to sell those knits this summer to Knitting Camp attendees. The most eagerly sought items included a blue lace shawl, a black-and-gold table mat and a mosaic-stitch pantsuit. While Swansen wasn't surprised by the enthusiastic response, she was a bit taken aback when "many bidders requested additional size details, saying they planned to wear the garments. I was quite startled by this, since I considered them to be archival, museum pieces. However, Barbara is very practical and unsentimental. She'd worn nearly all the garments, and I'm sure she's pleased to know their new owners will be wearing them as well." schoolhousepress.com

Movin' On Up

Congratulations to **Kara Gott Warner** on her promotion to Editorial Director of Knit and Crochet for Annie's Publishing. Warner will continue to serve as executive editor of *Creative Knitting* magazine but will also oversee *Crochet!* and *Crochet World*, the PBS series *Knit and Crochet Now!* and Annie's online knitting classes. "I'm passionate about yarn and the survival of the industry," Warner notes. "I look forward to strengthening existing relationships with Annie's yarn partners and cultivating new alliances as well." Annie's is a third-generation family business, located near Fort Wayne, Indiana, targeting home and family interests, including crafts and home décor.

Here Comes the (Knitted) Bride



Brenda Meece, owner of **Yarniverse** in Memphis, demonstrated how deep LYS friendships run when her shop hosted a wedding for a star employee.

"**Rebecca Muehling** works part-time and teaches classes here. After she got engaged, she and her fiancé decided to get married on 11/12/13, because they loved the date." But the couple had trouble finding the right location. Enter Meece, who offered her shop as the venue. "We have a staircase for the bride to come down, there's a place where musicians can sit and play, and we even have a

customer who is an ordained minister," says Meece. The bride and groom decided to run with the knitting theme—Muehling knit her own wedding dress in a soft pink shade of Rowan's Kidsilk Haze.

Customers chipped in, each treating the bride-to-be to a ball of yarn. Muehling dyed sock yarn to match her dress for matching socks and wristers. Customers also helped make the bride's bouquet by knitting and felting pink flowers. "I was a little nervous," confesses Meece, "but it was the highlight of our year. The local news filmed a spot, and everyone had a great time."



Mrs. Crosby's Creations

She's a cross between Audrey Hepburn and Dorothy Parker. She's a dyer of yarn but also a purveyor of products like stitch markers, ceramic buttons and project notebooks. She's something of an experiment—a new way of thinking about creativity and a celebration of the fun that comes from making pretty things. She's **Mrs. Crosby**, the face and personality behind a new venture by yarn company **Lorna's Laces**.

As you might expect, beautiful hand-dyed yarns will be a mainstay. "We've sourced five new yarns," says owner **Beth Casey**, "and will be dyeing them very differently from Lorna's Laces yarns to give them a look all their own." Look for more kettled-dyed yarns with "fantastic depth of color," Casey says, along with new yarn bases from different suppliers and, perhaps, smaller, exclusive runs of fibers for a bit of added excitement.

Casey is quick to point out that "Mrs. Crosby is more than a yarn company. While beautiful new yarns and colors are the beginning of a relationship with Mrs. Crosby, her wandering eye and traveling nature yearn to bring a varied line of products—everything from artisanal soaps and hand creams

to notecards and even bitters—into every LYS.

Why the decision to expand beyond the hand-painted yarns Lorna's Laces is known for? Says Casey, "It's been eleven years since I took the helm, and it's time for me to stretch myself again creatively. There are so many fabulous makers out there whom I find interesting. I wanted to explore them in a bigger way. And Lorna's Laces needed an alter ego. A girl can be sweet for only so long before she needs to let her sassy side fly."

While the new venture isn't named for any one person, Crosby is Casey's mother's maiden name, and the Mrs. Crosby figure represents the many strong women in Casey's family, herself included. "Lorna's Laces is your next-door neighbor. Mrs. Crosby is the fancy lady down the street who's always taking exotic vacations and whose perfume you never forget." Follow Mrs. Crosby on social media—Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook—and keep up with her adventures at lornaslaces.net.





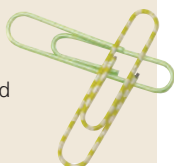
Publish or Perish?

Today's authors and publishers are going beyond the written word, dabbling in audio, video and more to entice consumers to purchase their books. Consider **Katie Startzman**, author of *The Knitted Slipper Book*. Startzman was so enthusiastic about promoting her book that she taught herself stop-motion animation, then created a video "trailer." The charming video features a knitter sitting fireside (both knitter and fire are knit, of course), needles busily clacking as she makes slippers for a special friend. **Melanie Falick**, publishing director of STC Craft (an imprint of Abrams Books), who worked with Startzman, sees trailers like this one as key to marketing new titles. "In the past, the technology for creating and distributing video was more complicated. Now it is more readily available, so it makes sense for us to explore it."

Falick's willingness to embrace new forms of marketing—multimedia and new media in particular—is one way STC Craft is staying at the forefront of craft publishing. "We need to figure out which types of physical books people still want," Falick explains, "and how we can enhance them and publicize them using multimedia and other new tools." Given crafting's emphasis on making and doing, multimedia offers authors of craft books the opportunity to provide supplemental content, whether additional patterns, inspiration for personalizing projects, or how-to tips. Book trailers like Startzman's are an important weapon in that revolution, offering potential purchasers a chance to preview content (the trailer includes images of an open copy of *The Knitted Slipper Book*, allowing viewers to get a feel for the book's style and patterns). In addition to the trailer, Startzman created video tutorials to accompany a number of the patterns in her book. "Certainly, readers can learn how to make knitted slippers from the text and photos in the book alone, but viewing the videos on Katie's site helps readers feel more confident," observes Falick.

Another STC Craft author, **Lena Corwin**, created a trailer for her book *Made by Hand* that uses video taken during the book's photo shoot. "It's really great to see the artisans who contributed to the book in action—knitting, crocheting, weaving, printing and so on," Falick says. For another STC title, Simon Leach's *Pottery Handbook*, instructional videos were not only available on YouTube but also included on a DVD that comes with the book.

Much has been written about the death of traditional publishing, but Falick isn't ready to call the undertaker. "We are in the midst of a revolution in book publishing," says Falick. "I hope that yarn stores see what we've done to help sell our books. For example, a store might make Katie's videos available to its customers on a digital device next to a display of the book and some project samples from it." This revolution will be televised—and posted on YouTube, Twitter, Audible and Facebook. abramsbooks.com/stccraft.html



PRISM The Art of Hand-Dyeing: Prism Turns 30

Laura Bryant graduated from the University of Michigan's School of Art and Design wanting nothing more than to make art. She had early success selling her work, but when the great recession of 1982 hit, Bryant needed to up her hours as a salesclerk and finisher at an LYS. "I got to know a sales representative for Tahki and Berroco," Bryant explains, "and when he changed careers, he suggested I take over his lines." Bryant quickly thrived as a sales rep and began traveling to LYS and industry events. While walking the aisles at TNNA, she saw her first hand-dyed yarns. "I thought, I can do that," she says. "I studied textiles and color and so had both areas of expertise covered. I had continued to grow as a colorist and dyer through my weavings, and I felt confident I could ramp up for production." Bryant reached out to Diane Friedman at Tahki (now Tahki • Stacy Charles), offering to dye a line of English tweeds. Friedman agreed—and Prism was born.

Prism officially began as a business in 1984, a fascinating time for hand knitting. "Knitting was in one of its periodic run-ups in popularity. At the time, there were a few powerhouse companies that did things the traditional way, and a few companies like Tahki that were more innovative," Bryant recalls. "That particular run of knitting popularity was playing to a crowd that had stopped knitting and had been enticed back. When the crash came a few years later, there weren't new knitters to take over." Bryant contrasts the ups and downs of the 1980s with today, pointing out that the industry did a better job of creating knitters who stuck around even after the scarf craze of the early 2000s subsided.

She is fascinated by the many ways the industry has changed over the past 30 years. "In addition to new technologies in yarn manufacturing, which has brought so many interesting knitting materials and yarn constructions to market, the Internet has of course been a driving force. Instead of a bunch of non-knitters making decisions about what knitters want—[in the old days] most companies were run by men who did not knit—the lines of communication are far more open and many more actual knitters are in the distribution chain."

Bryant also has a unique perspective on the importance of staying current in an industry in which trends can turn on a dime. She recalls how Prism premiered eyelash yarn at a 1980s TNNA show:

"I got one cone of eyelash a week before the show, whipped it into a sweater with some mohair, and showed the very first eyelash that retailers had ever seen." Prism's proprietary yarn, *Wild Thing*, a blend of multiple yarns and textures hand-dyed and tied together, put the company on the map in 1992. While *Wild Thing* is still extremely popular, when recession hit again and knitters "went into austerity mode," Prism focused more attention on its classic offerings.

With thirty-plus years under her belt, Bryant is a unique force in the yarn world. She still dyes all her yarn herself. Building on that unique perspective, Bryant recently wrote *Artful Knitting, Mindful Color* (XRX Books), which talks about the creation and use of hand-dyed yarns and includes patterns designed especially for these yarns. *Read more about Bryant in Erin Slonaker's interview with her on page 56.*



Crafty Critters

Get kids crafting early with delightful fiber-themed picture books.

Knitters, dog lovers and aficionados of all things adorable will fall in love with West Highland terriers Hank and Gracie, stars of a new book by LYS owner **Stacy Klaus**. Klaus owns **The Knitting Nest** in Austin, Texas, and confesses that having a shop dog was always part of her business plan. She now has two, and they are so well behaved, Klaus often has to answer the question, "Are they real?"

A conversation with Cooperative Press publisher Shannon Okey led Klaus to write *Hank and Gracie Save the Day*, which focuses in part on the shop's charity efforts. Says Klaus, "I wanted to help kids start thinking early about helping other people." She originally asked her brother to illustrate the book but he demurred, saying his daughter was a much better artist than he. So teenager **Molly Wade** produced the charming drawings that bring Hank and Gracie to life. The book also includes coloring pages, information about West Highland terriers and four simple patterns (knit, crochet and

felting) and gives instructions on how to donate handcrafted blankets to children's hospitals. Klaus and Wade have several sequels planned; find out more at cooperativepress.com/products-page/books/hank-and-gracie-save-the-day.

Quilters and sewers will adore *Patchwork Helps a Friend*, by **Gail Greiner** and **Jacqueline Schmidt**, featuring teddy-bear besties Fred and Patchwork. Both are delightfully fashioned from scraps and patches, so when Fred needs some fixing up, the friends seek out bits of fabric from their animal friends. Kids will enjoy the parade of contributors, everything from a narwhal and a starling to a llama. Collage-like illustrations by Jacqueline Schmidt perfectly suit the scrappy theme. Pop this picture book, published by POW! (a division of powerHouse Books), on the shelves near quilting supplies or a scrap-yarn blanket for customers with young children to snap up.



GLOBAL INVASION

There's a whole world full of beautiful yarn out there—and now even more of them are available for sale in North America. Renowned yarn manufacturer **Dale Garn** of Norway (dalegorn.no) has named **Mango Moon, LLC** (mangomoonyarns.com) its exclusive U.S. distributor for hand-knitting products. Says Dale Garn CEO **Espen Samsonsen**, "We've been fortunate to enjoy tremendous success in the Scandinavian markets and feel that we are in a position to refocus on the U.S. market. In Mango Moon we found a company as dedicated to knitting as we are. They share not only our passion for knitting as art and craft but for leaving the world a better place than we found it."

Dale's emphasis on quality is a perfect fit for Mango Moon, says owner **Laurie Cook**: "Dale's line complements ours beautifully. Together they provide a wonderful range of choices for the creative needle artist. We look forward to developing relationships with current Dale customers as well as broadening our customer base." Mango Moon now distributes a diverse selection of yarns, including their own handspun yarns with recycled fiber content.

Can't get enough Scandinavian yarn? Meet **The Yarn Guys**—a.k.a. **Dennis Rinkenberger** and **Jeffrey Wall**—who have taken over North American distribution of Norway's **Rauma** yarns. The two were approached by Rauma's previous distributor, who deemed them the perfect fit for the brand: Both are of Norwegian descent, were taking Norwegian language classes and sold the yarn in their shop, **Wall of Yarn**, in Freeport, Illinois. Wall explains, "We were already excited about the yarns, and now we can help bring them to a new generation of knitters and weavers." The Yarn Guys (theyarnguys.com) currently carry six of the Rauma yarns, with more on the way, including Ryegarn. Rauma yarns come in a wide range of colors—Finnullgarn, a fingering-weight wool, for example, comes in a whopping 100 colors. "Rauma yarns wear extremely well, with little to no pilling," says Wall. Pattern support in English comes in both booklet and single-pattern form.

Hand-painted-yarn lovers, take note: U.K.-based **Fyberspates** recently announced the launch of a new American website, FyberspatesUSA.com, as the sole U.S. distributor of the company's luxury yarns. Fyberspates is partnering with **Wool2Dye4's Sheila Trunzo**, who will oversee the shipping of Fyberspates yarns in the United States from Lynchburg, Virginia. Fyberspates produces Gleem (a Blue-Faced Leicester and silk blend) and Vivacious 4-ply and DK (both 100% superwash merino) in hand-dyed colorways. Fyberspates will also be distributing popular indie designer Kate Davies's book *Colours of Shetland* and is aiming to add more indie-design books to its catalog.

In Memoriam: JoLene Treace (1963–2013)

The knitting industry lost a vibrant and talented member when designer JoLene Treace of Fort Wayne, Indiana, lost her battle with cancer last November. Treace's fascination with knitting began when she was in high school, where, as a senior, she designed and machine-knit her graduation dress. After she began working as a registered nurse, she stopped knitting, only to begin again when her stepdaughter joined 4-H. Treace's designs were published in books and magazines and by yarn companies; she also published her own designs as Kristmen's Design Studio. Designer Beth Brown-Reinsel recalls Treace as "a generous, lovely person with the most disarming smile," and admired her "sophisticated sense of design. Her design work included Arans and ganseys, but her greatest love was lace: shawls and scarves with lovely drape and motifs. She was always swatching new yarns and new motifs she had discovered and kept many notebooks of these gems of inspiration." Katherine Misegades shared a blog with Treace and frequently teased her about her love of swatching: "While lots of knitters dread knitting a swatch, JoLene thrived on it." That passion and warmth endeared Treace to so many, including designer Melissa Leapman, who noted, "I will always remember the joyful effort JoLene put into her design work. Her enthusiasm for the industry—and for life—was contagious." Her friend and collaborator Misegades recalls, "Her lovely work is a tribute to her. I am thankful for her friendship and inspiration. The fibers will knit her to my memory even though she is gone."





Oldies But Goodies

Back in the days when students walked to school barefoot in the snow (uphill both ways!), they were often told, "Respect your elders." **The Amazings**, a British business designed to reconnect the generations, is sure to give younger generations a newfound respect for seniors—with a delightfully crafty spin. The Amazings offers online classes taught by "elders," all of whom are 50 or older, many of whom are in their 70s and 80s. Topics range from photography to cooking to jewelry making, with a heavy emphasis on textiles—knitting, felting, quilting, crocheting.

Cheryl Adamson, whose formal title is Head of Amazement, explains that the business was the brainchild of a social innovation company looking to approach aging in a new way. As Adamson says, "The more we



looked at it, trying to help 'old people' just didn't seem right. The more time we spent with people we thought needed our help, the more we realized we needed theirs." Inspired by the varied life experiences of older individuals, the founders of The Amazings decided to create a place where younger makers could draw on others' skills and wisdom.

Originally, The Amazings offered both online and in-person classes in the London area, but as business took off, the in-person classes were discontinued. "We wanted people around the country, and the world, to benefit from the elders' wisdom too. [Being online] means we're able to share the crafts with more people." The company is eager to work with older people everywhere, perhaps adding classes that focus on traditional crafts for which a particular region is known.

The popularity of the classes stems in part from the unique and personal connections they foster. "Our elders are fabulous," raves Adamson. "They have been so eager to be involved, share their skills and set up as micro-entrepreneurs." And the makers are equally enthusiastic, not least because classes are structured so that students "feel like they're learning from a wise friend rather than a detached teacher in a formal classroom setting," says Adamson. To that end, each class includes a "tea break" during which viewers get to hear the background of the particular elder who is teaching—like the story of Sue, a felter and published author who taught her craft to Native Americans; Ingrid, who holds the world record for knitting with the largest needles; and Helen, an expert spinner and hand dyer who has been knitting for more than 70 years.

Appropriately enough, the original desire that led to the creation of the Amazings—to do something positive for older folks—is perhaps the company's most exciting accomplishment. In addition to precious skills and individual stories being saved and shared, The Amazings is helping to shed a different light on an entire generation. "Not only are our elders experts in their fields," says Adamson, "but they're also suggesting ideas, using iPads, and generally proving that our views on aging need to be reevaluated. We all remember being taught how to make things by our grandparents or a kindly neighbor, and so the idea of re-creating that taps into something very powerful." Learn more about the initiative at theamazings.com.

marketREPORT

Back in Print

From time to time, books make a comeback—often improved and better than ever. These two noteworthy tomes are back on shelves again.

Knitting Workshop, by Elizabeth Zimmermann

Most knitters can remember the exact moment they first discovered Zimmermann's writing: that glorious feeling of finding a

kindred spirit who was as passionate about (read: obsessed by) knitting as they were. So an expanded reprint of *Knitting Workshop* is a welcome addition to her venerable body of work. The book's been converted to a larger size, in paperback form and with color photographs. All of your favorites (the Baby Surprise Jacket, the Heart Hat, the Rorschach Sweater and more) are here, but with more detailed instructions, editorial notes and, in some cases, updated sizing. Best of all, a few of Zimmermann's previously unpublished journal writings have been added. It's impossible to get enough of Zimmermann's work, and Schoolhouse Press is sure to create many new fans with this excellent expanded re-issue of a classic.



Handspinning Cotton, by Olive and Harry Linder, updated by Joan S. Ruane

When the original edition was published in 1977, most handspinners were focusing on wool. The Linders,

however, had a passion for cotton, and they set out to convince spinners that the fiber was no trickier to spin than others. Their book would soon become the go-to source for cotton spinners, focusing on specific techniques and praising cotton's unique characteristics. The original *Handspinning Cotton* went out of print in 1995, so a new generation eager to master the intricacies of cotton will be pleased to discover this reprinted version, with updates providing info on today's more

sophisticated fiber choices and advanced wheels. From preparing the fiber to dyeing and spinning it, selecting tools, and using handspun cotton in weaving, knitting, crochet and more, a prodigious amount of information is packed into this small booklet.

Take Up Arms

Crafters are taking up arms—and using them for knitting.

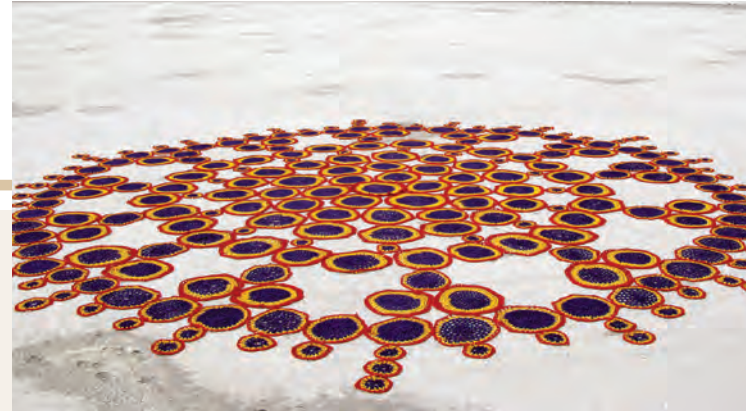
This year may well go down as the year of arm knitting, a technique in which crafters use hands and arms instead of knitting needles to hold and manipulate stitches. A *Wall Street Journal* article published in late 2013 brought the trend into the American mainstream, although Italian designer Andrea Brena had long been using the technique to fashion large rugs and chairs out of thick strips of textiles discarded by factories. (Learn more about his "Knitted Army" project at andreabrena.com/gallery/knitted-army.)

Linda Pratt, consumer marketing manager for **Westminster Fibers**, has seen firsthand how arm knitting is taking off. "Right after the *Wall Street Journal* article appeared, one of our sales reps, Richard Brown, showed a video of arm knitting to his wife and daughter," she says. "They spent the weekend arm-knitting projects. We told our other reps about it and they agreed that it was a perfect use for bulky-weight My Mountain yarns." Pratt realizes that arm knitting may be a trend, but, she notes, "It's a trend that's selling yarn. It's simple and fast to teach and a great way to get customers into your store to buy more yarn." Learn how to arm-knit with Schachenmayr's video at youtube.com/watch?v=8tZuulBbqR8.

Chain Reaction

Gwen Blakley Kinsler learned to crochet as a Peace Corps volunteer in the early 1970s, not realizing it would become a lifelong fascination. Last year Kinsler, founder of the Crochet Guild of America, published *The Fine Art of Crochet*, which profiles 20 influential artists who choose crochet as their medium. “For 20 years I was vigilant about searching for and documenting crochet as art. I picked the artists, male and female, who impressed me the most.” The diversity and depth of the artists she selected is evident in their chosen materials (garden hoses, recycled paper, wire, plastic grocery bags, yarn, thread), how they mix other media with crochet (ceramic, polyester resin, wood frames, computer cords), and the settings they place the pieces in (around a neck, incorporated into a forest, displayed on a tabletop). Their styles range from abstract to tribal to representational, with just about everything in between.

Kinsler hopes her book will help combat stereotypes about crochet that she’s encountered over the years. “Legions of knitters were taught to look down on crochet and were told that in centuries past it was only the scullery maids who crocheted, so it was not a valued craft,” she observes. “Crocheters were often told they couldn’t crochet with [nice yarn] and for a time were their own worst enemies, using the rigid acrylic yarns of the time that resulted in their garments looking like suits of armor.” Kinsler found that the same preconceived notions about crochet persisted in the art world. “I think the art world is less accepting of the fiber arts than other media, and crochet falls down one rung from there



on the hierarchy.”

Still, Kinsler sees those attitudes changing. “The Internet has had a profound impact on opening eyes to the artistic side of crochet.” She is heartened by burgeoning interest in the craft, including what she describes as a “wild flurry of activity” surrounding crochet and crocheters. She notes, “To have a mega-company like Lion Brand take up a huge space at their booth at the Craft & Hobby Association show in January with a crochet exhibit by Nathan Vincent is a huge nod to crochet and crochet art.

“I hope my book will have an influence not only on crocheters but on the art world as well, that it will be a resource that continues to educate about what a valid and amazing medium crochet can be.” gwenblakleykinsler.weebly.com



Mainstream Mentions

It’s always fun to see yarny topics hit mainstream media. Last fall, Manhattan yarn shop **Loopy Mango** hit it big with a mention in *The New York Times*’ fashion section—including a photograph of owners **Waejong Kim** and **Anna Pulvermakher** wearing a few of their trademark super-chunky scarves (left). “We were in line for an open call for designers at Henri Bendel, and we saw [the *Times*’ street fashion photographer] Bill Cunningham. He was on his bike as usual, taking pictures around the city, and he took ours. Then we started talking,” Pulvermakher says. Cunningham was entranced by the stylish scarves—particularly when he heard they can be whipped up in 15 to 30 minutes in a bulky-weight yarn. His shout-out to Loopy Mango, in his November 15, 2013, article, was quite a coup. “The day the newspaper came out, phone calls and online orders started pouring in, and we increased foot traffic at our store, too,” states Pulvermakher. The day was a success on another score: The Bendel buyers were so impressed, they hosted a Loopy Mango trunk show at Bendel’s flagship store, showing off ready-to-wear accessories, DIY knit kits and custom-knit garments made with Loopy Mango’s organically dyed yarn. Learn more about the store at loopymango.com.

The folks at **Schacht Spindle Co.** (schachtspindle.com) were equally thrilled when they learned that their Cricket loom was being featured in *Martha Stewart Living*’s holiday buyers’ guide. Sales of the loom spiked about 33 percent following publication. “It’s hard to know exactly what causes a spike in sales,” Schacht Creative Director Jane Patrick admits, “but the product was in the magazine, and stores were stocking it. We wrote a press release for dealers and sent them photographs and materials for them to make shop displays. And because they had the product in stock, they sold it.” In keeping with its wholesale-only mission, Schacht placed a button on its site directing consumers to a special list of dealers who were participating in the Martha Stewart promotion. “It was a great project in terms of partnering with dealers and getting traffic to their shops. We also saw some interest in new dealerships, too.”

If you have kids, chances are you’ve logged at least a little time watching children’s television channel Nickelodeon. And if you thought you recognized knitted gnomes and other familiar creatures on the network last holiday season, you weren’t imagining things. Mochimochi Land creator **Anna Hrachovec** collaborated with Nickelodeon, creating a series of animated holiday clips that played between shows, identifying the station. Hrachovec explains, “Like the other stop-motion videos and GIFs I’ve made, the animations were created by moving the creatures a fraction of an inch and taking a photograph, and repeating that again and again until we had a series of hundreds of photos that could be put together to make one action happen. Then repeat, and repeat.” Hrachovec notes that a mere 10 seconds of animation could take four hours or more to shoot. A total of 10 animations starring Mochimochi characters aired on the network. Hrachovec says, “It was an incredible experience to get to work with such a talented and enthusiastic team. I had a blast with this project, and it’s made me more excited about the possibilities for mochis in motion.” mochimochiland.com



Still Going Strong

In 1974, gas cost 62 cents a gallon, bread went for 36 cents per loaf and the most popular TV show was *Laverne & Shirley*. It was also the year a Massachusetts stay-at-home mom named **Barbara Elkins** decided to offer a new kind of weaving studio from the basement of her house. Elkins made a grand total of \$55 in profit that year, but as times changed, so did her business. Forty years later, **Webs: America's Yarn Store** is a major player in the yarn industry, with a bustling retail shop, thriving Internet business and its own line of yarns and patterns.

Elkins was looking for a way to fund her yarn-purchasing habit when she and a partner opened the weaving studio. The business took off, and three years later, Webs moved to a building in Amherst, right at the time hand knitting was undergoing a renaissance. Elkins began stocking more knitting yarns, and just four years later, the business again needed to find a bigger space.

During the 1980s, Elkins's husband Art retired from his job as a college professor, and, as their daughter-in-law **Kathy Elkins** says, laughing, "his wife was kind enough to offer him a job." Fortunately for Webs, Art had an eye for business-related technology: He developed the company's mail order

business; took advantage of the then-thriving textile market in the U.S. by buying mill ends from yarn manufacturers and selling them to hand knitters and weavers; and, most iconically, had the foresight to obtain the URL yarn.com. "Art read that this thing called the Internet was coming," Kathy recalls, "and the article advised business owners to reserve a URL." Webs eventually moved to its current site in Northampton, a large building that offered plenty of room for expansion. Today Webs has more than 70 employees and its own yarn line, Valley Yarns, as well as regular inventory, patterns, weaving and spinning equipment, classes and a popular weekly podcast. They still mail catalogs—now magazine-quality and full-color.

Webs began celebrating its milestone anniversary in January. "We are partnering with four amazing hand dyers," Kathy Elkins explains, "giving them each a Valley Yarns base and asking them to dye a limited number of skeins in their trademark

colors. Each quarter we'll highlight a new dyer using a new base—and when the yarn is gone, it's gone." In January, Madelinetosh dyed Valley Yarns Superwash DK; exclusive pattern support was supplied by Melissa LaBarre, Amy Herzog and Doris Chan. Throughout the year, Webs will also partner with Lorna's Laces, Malabrigo and Dream in Color, offering exclusive patterns created especially for Webs, which will donate proceeds from the pattern sales and a portion of yarn sales to a local charity, Safe Passage, and to a national charity.



ROWAN

www.knitrowan.com

TNNA Booths
427, 429, 431
526-530
627-631
726, 728, 730

WESTMINSTER
FIBERS

Distributor of Rowan,
Schachenmayr, Regia,
My Mountain, Lopi,
James C. Brett,
Butterfly Cotton Super 10
800 445-9276 US
800 263-2354 Canada

us.schachenmayr.com
us.schachenmayr.com/mymountain
www.istex.is, www.jamescbrett.co.uk

SKOMER
Brushed Fleece

Compassion-KNIT

Philanthropy is still a driving force in the yarn industry. The following organizations are using their passion for knitting and crochet to create jobs for those in need.

Ricefield Collective

Academic **Meredith Ramirez**

Talusan had been knitting for more than a decade when she traveled to the Ifugao region of the Philippines to conduct graduate research. Talusan discovered that the mountain terraces there, renowned for their beauty, were also economic anchors, providing farmland that helped local residents survive. But as more and more residents moved to cities or abroad seeking employment, the terraces began to erode. An entire way of life was disappearing. Talusan wondered if knitting could provide the answer, allowing local residents to maintain their traditional lifestyle while supplementing their incomes by selling knitted goods. "The project began organically," Talusan explains, "with me teaching a group of women how to knit. It was when we tried to figure out how to bring the products to market that **Ricefield Collective** was born."

Currently, Ricefield Collective employs some 25 knitters, training them to produce knitted hats and scarves and selling them to a global market via the organization's website. "Our design features and high-quality materials are obvious to knitters in ways that are not as clear to a general audience," says Talusan. A recent collaboration with yarn manufacturer **Quince & Co.** was a great success; a hand-woven tote bag designed by Ricefield Collective and sold on Quince's website sold out in less than 24 hours. Talusan



has been moved by the enthusiastic response, both within the knitting community and in the Ifugao region. "We're a growing organization, and we're always on the lookout for people interested in collaborating with us," says Talusan. ricefieldcollective.org.

Krochet Kids International

Stewart Ramsey calls himself a "social entrepreneur." As a high school student, Ramsey and his friends began selling hats they crocheted to earn spending money; as a college student, Ramsey took his interest in crochet to the next level, founding (with the help of three friends) **Krochet Kids International** (KKI), a nonprofit organization designed to empower communities by providing education, employment and mentorship. The concept is simple: Give people in impoverished areas yarn and a hook, and purchase the fruits of their labor at a fair wage. From that simple concept, KKI has established two locations, one in Uganda and one in Peru, employing women who produce handmade accessories such as hats and headbands,



hoodies, T-shirts and other apparel. Krochet Kids emphasizes a big-picture approach: In addition to providing a steady income, its programs educate makers about financial management, budgeting and other issues, with the ultimate goal of freeing them from

poverty and empowering them to make a better life. Purchase items (each signed by its maker) or read profiles of individual makers at krochetkids.org.

What Knitters Really Think of Their LYSes

One of the interesting results of the State of Specialty NeedleArts survey conducted by TNNA last year was seeing where LYSO and customer responses were in line or out of step. We asked India Hart Wood of Hart Business Research, who conducted the survey, to detail a few problem areas. For full study information, visit tnna.org/?Survey2013Yarn.

Yarn shop owners uniformly believe their stores rate as excellent. But their customers have a few stitches to pick. The yarn section of the study is a reliable portrait based on surveys of 670 yarn shops, 12,475 knitters, 2,892 crocheters, 1,302 weavers and 898 spinners.

• **Friendly staff? "Of course!" say shop owners.** The TNNA study showed that all four segments of yarn fiber artists—knitters, crocheters, spinners and weavers—agree that "staff is friendly" is one of the most important features of a local yarn store. Shop owners almost universally say they have a friendly staff, but not all customers concur: In 2007, the last time the question was

asked, 36 percent said their LYS needs improvement in this area. As an LYSO, it is imperative that you learn what your customers think about the customer service you provide. How to find out? Survey your customers yourself or ask a secret shopper service to visit your store.

• **A wide selection is essential but often neglected.**

Offering a large selection and actually having products in stock are two features that are very important to knitters and crocheters. The 2007 survey indicated that 34 percent of knitters think their LYS needs improvement in this area. In 2013, shop owners proved customers' perceptions correct when they gave "wide selection of products" a relatively low feature rating for their shops. More than a few knitters commented in the survey that their LYSes' limited yarn selection was responsible for driving them online, often unwillingly. As one knitter commented, "There's only one knitting store in my town, and it has limited supplies and selection. Therefore, online shopping has become a necessity. There are many, many good (even great) stores to be found online, but it's easier and more fun to shop in per-

son, where you can see and feel the fibers and ask questions without using online chats."

• **Crocheters say LYS location is important, but that stores are not conveniently located.**

Yarn shops owners most often rated their store's location as its weakest attribute. This matters somewhat to knitters, but quite a lot to crocheters. In 2007, 29 percent of knitters and a full 45 percent of crocheters said their LYS's location needs improvement. This may indicate that owners should be making an effort to lure more crocheters to the store. A common complaint from many stitchers was having no yarn shop in their town or even within an hour's drive. Business-minded yarn enthusiasts should think about opening shops in underserved areas.

• **Stores and knitters agree: LYSes have mastered quality and knowledge.**

Knitters and yarn shop owners do agree on the importance and excellence of product quality and knowledgeable staff. Stores should pat themselves on the back for this, as quality and knowledge are essential advantages local yarn stores have over craft chains.

YMN CALENDAR

Events to keep you in stitches this spring and summer.
(For more, visit yarnmarketnews.com.)

May 3-4

Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival

Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, Maryland
sheepandwool.org

May 3-5

TNNA Summer Trade Show

Indianapolis Convention Center
Indianapolis, Indiana
tnna.org

May 10-11

New Hampshire Sheep & Wool Festival

Deerfield Fairground
Deerfield, New Hampshire
nhswga.com

May 15-18

Men's Spring Knitting Retreat

Easton Mountain Retreat Center
Easton Mountain, New York
mensknittingretreat.com

May 16-18

Minnesota Shepherd's Harvest Sheep & Wool Festival

Washington County Fairgrounds
Lake Elmo, Minnesota
shepherdsharvestfestival.org

May 16-18

Snake River Fiber Arts Fair

Eastern Idaho Technical College
Idaho Falls, Idaho
srfiberartists.org

May 17

Rhode Island Wool & Fiber Festival

Coggeshall Farm
Bristol, Rhode Island
coggeshallfarm.org

May 17-18

Kentucky Sheep & Fiber Festival

Masterson Station Park
Lexington, Kentucky
kentuckysheepandfiber.com

May 17-18

Long Island Fleece & Fiber Fair

Hallockville Museum Farm
Riverhead, New York
hallockville.com/fiber_fair.html

May 23-24

Middle Tennessee Fiber Festival

Dickson County Fairgrounds
Dickson, Tennessee
tnfiberfestival.com

May 24-25

Great Lakes Fiber Show

Wayne County Fairgrounds
Wooster, Ohio
greatlakesfibershow.com

May 24-25

Massachusetts Sheep & Woolcraft Fair

Cummington Fairgrounds
Cummington, Massachusetts
masheepwool.org

June 4-8

Squam Spring Retreat

Rockywood-Deephaven Camps
Holderness, New Hampshire
squamartworkshops.com

June 5-8

Estes Park Wool Market

Fairgrounds at Stanley Park
Estes Park, Colorado
estesparkcvb.com/events-calendar

June 7-8

Flagstaff Fiber/Wool Festival

Arizona Historical Society
Pioneer Museum
Flagstaff, Arizona
fiberandwoolfestival.atflagstaff.com

June 7-8

Maine Fiber Frolic

Windsor Fairgrounds
Windsor, Maine
fiberfrolic.com

June 14-15

Iowa Sheep & Wool Festival

Jasper County Fairgrounds
Colfax, Iowa
iowasheepandwoolfestival.com

June 14-22

Worldwide Knit in Public Week

Multiple international locations
kipday.com

June 16-21

Sheep Is Life Celebration

Diné College, Tsailé Campus
Navajo Nation (Arizona)
navajolifeway.org

June 20-23

Alice Springs Beanie Festival

Araluen Arts Centre
Witchetty's, Alice Springs,
Australia
beaniefest.org

June 20-22

Black Sheep Gathering

Lane County Fairgrounds
Eugene, Oregon
blacksheepgathering.org

June 27-28

Woolfest

Mitchell's Lakeland
Livestock Centre
Cockermouth, Cumbria,
England
woolfest.co.uk

July 18-20

Australian Sheep & Wool Show

Prince of Wales Showgrounds
Bendigo, Victoria, Australia
sheepshow.com

July 23-27

The Knit & Crochet Show

Radisson Hotel Manchester
Manchester, New Hampshire
knitandcrochetshow.com

July 26-27

Fibre-East 2014

Redborne Community College
Amphill, Bedfordshire,
England
fibre-east.co.uk/FibreEast/Home.html

July 27-August 2

New England Fiber Arts Retreat

Medomak Retreat Center
Washington, Maine
medomakretreatcenter.com/newenglandfiberartsretreat.php

August 1-3

Midwest Fiber & Folk Art Fair

Lake County Fairgrounds
Grayslake, Illinois
fiberandfolk.com

August 2-3

Mid-Ohio Fiber Fair

Gib & Lou Reese Ice Arena
Newark, Ohio
midohiofiberfair.com

August 7-10

Stitches Midwest

Schaumburg Renaissance &
Convention Center
Schaumburg, Illinois
knittinguniverse.com/midwest

August 13-17

Michigan Fiber Festival

Allegan County Fairgrounds
Allegan, Michigan
michiganfiberfestival.info

August 22-23

Great Basin Fiber Arts Fair

Salt Lake County
Equestrian Park
South Jordan, Utah
greatbasinfiberartsfair.org

August 27-September 1

Monterey County Fair

Monterey County Fairgrounds
Monterey, California
montereycountyfair.com

August 30-31

World Sheep and Fiber Arts Festival

Bethel, Missouri
worldsheepfest.com

September 3-7

Fiber College of Maine Searsport Shores

Ocean Camping
Searsport, Maine
fibercollege.org

September 5-7

Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival

Jeffersonville County Fair Park
Jeffersonville, Wisconsin
wisconsinsheepandwoolfestival.com

September 6-7

Garden State Fiber Festival

Hunterdon County Fairgrounds
Lambertville, New Jersey
njsheep.org

September 6-7

Pennsylvania Endless Mountains Fiber Festival

Harford Fairgrounds
Harford, Pennsylvania
pafiberfestival.com

September 12-14

California Wool & Fiber Festival

Mendocino County Fairgrounds
Boonville, California
fiberfestival.com

September 12-14

Georgia Alpaca FiberFest Columbus

Convention & Trade Center
Columbus, Georgia
gafiberfest.com

September 18-20

Arkansas Fiber Arts Extravaganza

Hot Springs Convention Center
Hot Springs, Arkansas
arfiberartsextravaganza.com

September 20-21

Finger Lakes Fiber Festival

Hemlock Fairgrounds
Hemlock, New York
gvhg.org/fiber-fest

September 27-28

Oregon Flock & Fiber Festival

Clackamas County Event Center
Canby, Oregon
flockandfiberfestival.com

September 27-28

Southern Adirondack Fiber Festival

Washington County Fairgrounds
Greenwich, New York
adkfiber.com

Book Reviews

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Tudor Roses

By Alice Starmore
Calla Editions; \$40
ISBN: 978-1606600474



Alice Starmore's original *Tudor Roses*, published in 1998, was a stunning collection of sweaters inspired by Tudor monarchs both male and female. Some 15 years later, Starmore has released a revised edition, breathtaking both in production value (larger in size, at 11 by 13½ inches, with high-quality paper and elegant cloth cover) and in design. Like the previous edition, this *Tudor Roses* features a selection of exquisite stranded colorwork and textured stitchwork inspired by such well-known Tudor figures as Elizabeth I and Anne Boleyn. And like its predecessor, the new edition includes glorious photographs of each design along with charted motifs. What's different? The selection of patterns differs from the original edition: Gone are the men's patterns (Henry VII and Henry VIII); three garments (Jane Seymour, Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth of York) have been completely redone, keeping their original names but looking nothing like the original designs; and patterns inspired by four Tudor women who did not appear in the original have been added. The remaining patterns appear in similar form, using the same basic motifs, but have been updated in fit and knit in different, sometimes substantially changed, colorways. In the preface to the revised edition, Starmore describes her deliberate decision to shift focus: "Women have come far since those times, but not far enough, and it is for this reason that I decided to focus entirely on Tudor women and to leave the men out of the story." Gender politics aside, the revised *Tudor Roses* is a masterpiece of hand knitting,

seamlessly integrating the turbulent history of a fascinating royal line into its spectacular designs.

Lovely Knitted Lace

By Brooke Nico
Lark Crafts; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1454707813

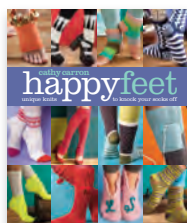
With this elegant book, Nico reminds us that much of lace knitting is derived from geometry. The book organizes its projects by shape—square, triangle, circle and rectangle. You'll find shawls and stoles in each, of course, but Nico also uses the shapes to create graceful, wearable garments like the chic Birch jacket (ingeniously made from two squares), the knit-from-center-out Angel shawl and the octagonal



Poinsettia jacket. After reading introductory sections on yarn selection, gauge, chart reading, special cast-ons and fixing mistakes, less experienced lace lovers can hone their skills on the Posies wrap (stockinette-stitch portions balance out the lace edging) or the Moondance shrug (with an easy-to-learn one-row stitch pattern). Patterns are knit in a range of yarn weights from lace to worsted, and a set of supplemental motifs following the pattern section encourages knitters to experiment. Also of note is the elegant styling and photography by Carrie Bostick Hoge, allowing the sheer beauty of Nico's lacework to shine.

Happy Feet: Unique Knits to Knock Your Socks Off

By Cathy Carron
Sixth&Spring Books; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1936096701
Carron brings her own unique design sensibility, full of color and unexpected detail, to the sock world with her latest book. Sock traditionalists, be forewarned: These are not the same old calf-length ribbed socks you've gotten

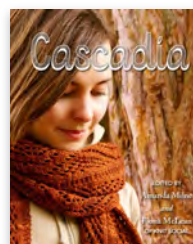


leg warmers with ankle zips or dropped-stitch motifs; socks with heel and toe cutouts designed for yoga; even socks with a built-in pocket to hold keys or an iPod. Carron's creativity seems boundless: monogrammed slippers, socks with triple-layered cuffs, fun-fur tops, even a sack to tuck feet into while lounging on the couch. A techniques section includes tips on skills needed for various patterns, as well as a basic sock pattern for one toe-up and two cuff-down versions. If your sock patterns are making you snooze, *Happy Feet* is sure to wake you up and get you knitting funky footwear posthaste.

Cascadia

By Amanda Milne and Fiona McLean
Cooperative Press; \$26.95

(print + PDF), \$16.95 (PDF only)
ISBN: 978-1937513337
Cascadia, the dreamy-sounding region surrounding the Cascade Mountains of Washington and Canada, evokes images of clear lakes, mountain peaks and woodland meadows—inspiration for authors Milne and McLean. Both are natives of this majestic region, and they used their extensive local contacts (they own a knitting-event business called Knit Social) to assemble 11 patterns from Northwestern designers using plenty of locally dyed yarns. Highlights of the collection—



half are sweaters, half accessories—include Holly Yeoh's lovely lacy cardigan, Alexa

Ludeman's Sea Wall socks with crisscross cables and Jane Richmond's cozy textured cardigan. Each pattern is photographed against a gorgeous natural backdrop, making the book a feast for the eyes as well as the needles.

50 Yards of Fun: Knitting Toys From Scrap Yarn

By Rebecca Danger
Martingale & Co.; \$16.99
ISBN: 978-1604683035

In this book, the perennial problem of what to do with small bits of left-over yarn is solved rather



neatly by monster maven Rebecca Danger. Here, she offers more than 30 itty-bitty stuffed creatures to knit. Each uses (what else?) 50 yards of worsted-weight yarn, give or take, and although small in size, the creatures are big on charm and whimsy. Danger organizes her toys by basic body shape, giving variations within each category. She cleverly includes amigurumi-style objects (a smiling telephone, a bowling ball and pins) as well as animals, birds and bugs. Instructions with color photographs help explain tricky techniques, and a separate section gives tips on what to do with the finished toys. The designs are knit mostly in the round, with embellishment and seaming providing plenty of personality, and they can be adapted to just about any weight of yarn. Wind off some mini-skeins for your customers and let them go wild.

Stranded Knits

By Ann Kingstone
Ann Kingstone Designs; £17.50
ISBN: 978-0956940568
Yorkshire designer Kingstone combines user-friendly technical instruction with 16 colorful designs in her self-published book *Stranded Knits*. She begins with basic instruction in the art of

stranded knitting: how to select colors, manage two strands of yarn, trap long floats, and steak, for starters. She then includes a series of “smart skills”: explanatory drawings and text showing



techniques such as splicing, specific methods of wrapping and turning, buttonhole options and cast-ons. Designs, knit in beautiful Rowan yarns, are inspired by flora (like the sweet Rosebud cardigan for girls) and fauna (the William sweater features a gamboling bunny on the yoke) as well as traditional snowflake and star motifs. If an adult-sized Fair Isle sweater seems a daunting undertaking, Kingstone includes smaller items (hats, mitts, an e-reader cover) to get you started.

Knit Noro 1•2•3 Skeins

Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95
ISBN: 978-1936096695



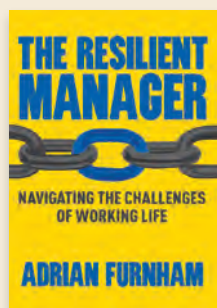
Knit Noro 1•2•3 Skeins is the newest in a series of books showcasing the lush fibers and gorgeous colors of Noro yarns. It's devoted to projects that call for, as the title suggests, one, two or three balls of yarn, cleverly allowing knitters to use leftover balls or pick up brand-new colorways in budget-friendly amounts. Designers including Cheryl Murray, Alice Tang and Jacqueline van Dillen present creative and attractive uses for such Noro favorites as Kureyon, Silk Garden and Taiyo, taking the self-striping colorways in new directions. Scarves, cowls and small garments like vests and shawls prove that you don't need more than a skein (or two, or three) to make beauti-

The ART of Doing Business

The Resilient Manager

By Adrian Furnham
Palgrave Macmillan; \$45
ISBN: 978-1137361066

U.K. social psychologist Adrian Furnham thinks you, and everyone else who manages others in the workplace, need to become better at rolling with the punches. Stress, says Furnham, is

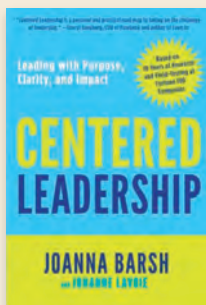


so commonplace and inevitable that managers have no choice but to deal with it. To be resistant to stress will help you think clearly during difficult times and handle negative emotions and experiences with aplomb—a constellation of traits he calls “resilience.” Furnham begins his chatty book with an overview, including lists of resilient traits, strategies for coping with stress and simple quizzes to help the reader self-assess. Furnham follows up with 70 or so short essays on topics touching on resilience: social media, generation gaps in the workplace, managerial styles, hiring decisions and more. The author's observations are definitely oriented toward corporate America, but dig around and you'll find valuable nuggets of information that will help you manage employees in a smaller business setting too.

Centered Leadership

By Joanna Barsh and Johanne Lavoie
Crown Business; \$26
ISBN: 978-0804138871

What makes one person a merely good leader and another truly great? Joanna Barsh spent



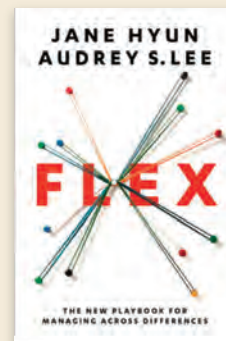
years interviewing leaders of Fortune 500 companies in an effort to find out, first focusing on women and later expanding her research to both genders. Barsh and her coauthor assert that five specific components—meaning, framing, connecting, engaging and energizing—are the foundation for truly remarkable leadership. They walk the reader through each component

in a workshop-like format, providing quizzes, questions (with blanks for writing in answers) and other self-assessment tools, interspersed with personal anecdotes and profiles of leaders they've interviewed. The authors clearly believe that leadership skills can be developed through introspection and planning, and their focus on self-analysis and mindfulness will appeal to many overburdened, overwhelmed managers.

Flex: The New Playbook for Managing Across Differences

By Jane Hyun and Audrey S. Lee
HarperBusiness; \$27.99
ISBN: 978-0062248527

Statistics show that the global workforce has become increasingly diverse: more female, younger and more multicultural. Yet traditional



management training tends to gloss over differences in styles of communication, cultural attitudes toward workplace behavior and personality traits. Authors Jane Hyun and Audrey Lee believe managers discount these fundamental differences at their own peril, to the detriment of productivity, employee retention and customer relations. Their solution? A new style of leadership they call “flex.” The term sounds like a form of exercise, and in a way it is: Instead of flexing muscles, readers are urged to flex or bend their leadership styles to adapt to the diverse segments of their workforce. Consider, for example, the popular “open-door” policy in which managers encourage employees to raise concerns directly. The authors suggest that managers consider which employees are *not* stopping by to share their concerns, why that might be, and find alternative ways to get input from these particular employees. The authors' premise is intriguing and is buttressed by anecdotes that showcase success and failure at flexing and specific tips for building more flex into one's leadership style.

Book Reviews

ful, wearable items, whether you favor subtler colorways or love rich jewel tones.

The Magic of Shetland Lace Knitting

By Elizabeth Lovick

St. Martin's Griffin; \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1250039088



So many knitters gaze wistfully at the ethereal lace of the Shetland Isles but despair of ever creating those beautiful patterns. Lovick wants to change that, and her new book seeks to translate the beauty of lace into specific skills that any motivated knitter can master. The book highlights seven beautiful projects to inspire knitters, but its thrust is instruction and inspiration. She begins with an explanation of Shetland lace knitting and talks about why she is so fascinated by it. She then walks the reader through a lace-knitting primer: yarn choice, cast-ons, yarn overs and decreases, fixing mistakes, blocking and seaming, even tips for designing garments—a wealth of useful information. Next is an introduction to stitches: allover patterns, insertions, motifs and edgings. Stitches are shown in large, clear photographs, with both charted and written instructions. Then Lovick gets stitchers started, with patterns for a delightful mesh crescent shawl, sweet lace mitts and an heirloom-in-the-making baby set.

The Rhinebeck Sweater

By Ysolda Teague

Ysolda Teague; \$38

ISBN: 978-0956525857

For many East Coast knitters, an annual pilgrimage to the New York State Sheep & Wool Festival each October constitutes the high holy days of the knitting year. The popular festival (dubbed



“Rhinebeck,” after the town in which the festival is held) draws fiber lovers, farmers and vendors from all over the country, charming attendees with picture-perfect autumn splendor. Popular indie designer Ysolda Teague taps into Rhinebeck love with her self-published book devoted to the “Rhinebeck sweater,” that just-off-the-needles hand knit specially made to wear to the festival. Teague turned to 10 designing friends, including Connie Chang Chinchio, Amy Herzog and Cecily Glowik MacDonald, to join her in creating the perfect meet-up-with-knitting-friends sweater. Each pattern is accompanied by abundant photos and background about the designer and her inspiration. Profiles of the small companies that produced the yarn for each sweater are included too, providing a veritable shopping list for attendees. If you’ve never been to Rhinebeck, you’ll add it to your bucket list after reading this celebration of sheep-show love; if you’re a regular attendee, you’ll want to cast on one of these lovely sweaters while dreaming of sheep frolicking through glorious red and gold leaves on a crisp fall day.

Knit Your Own Zoo

By Sally Muir and Joanna Osborne

Black Dog & Leventhal

Publishers; \$14.95

ISBN: 978-1579129606



Muir and Osborne have taught knitters how to stitch their own dogs and cats; in this book they branch out into an entire menagerie of exotic creatures, everything from an anteater to a zebra, with all sorts of beasts—camel, polar bear, meerkat—in between. Like the

other books in the duo’s “Knit Your Own” series, you’ll find step-by-step (limb by limb? paw by paw?) instructions for each animal, along with closeup photographs and helpful hints. The authors note that their selection of animals was necessarily idiosyncratic given the variety and breadth of the animal kingdom, but how can you argue with choices like a fruit bat (hanging upside down, of course), a ring-tailed lemur and an armadillo?

Learn to Knit, Love to Knit

By Anna Wilkinson

Potter Craft; \$19.99

ISBN: 978-0804136808

Looking for a how-to-knit book that goes beyond the garter-stitch rectangle? Anna Wilkinson clearly believes that new knitters can tackle any kind of project they want. *Learn to Knit, Love to Knit* is aimed at the fearless learner—



a confident crafter who will fall in love with the book’s colorful, eclectic designs and teach herself to knit in an afternoon or two so she can make them. The first half of the book is instruction-oriented, explaining basic skills with clear photos; the second part offers 10 patterns designed to familiarize beginners with the basics—and then some. A striped scarf with pompom ends, chunky ribbed hats and wristlets get knitters started, but apart from a few stockinette sweaters, these are the only patterns that fall within a traditional definition of “easy.” Other patterns in this section might be described more accurately as “simplified,” as they



Bestseller Box

Here’s what was hot on the bestseller lists for the third week of February:

Amazon Needlecrafts and Textile Crafts List

1. *A to Z Crochet* (Martingale & Co.)
2. *Lovely Knitted Lace*, by Brooke Nico (Lark Crafts)
3. *400 Knitting Stitches* (Crown)
4. *Cast On, Bind Off*, by Leslie Ann Bestor (Storey)
5. *Stitch ‘N Bitch: The Knitter’s Handbook*, by Debbie Stoller (Workman)

Barnes & Noble Knitting List

1. *Knitting Yarns: Writers on Knitting*, edited by Ann Hood (W.W. Norton)
2. *Tudor Roses*, by Alice Starmore (Dover)
3. *60 Quick Knits From America’s Yarn Shops* (Sixth&Spring Books)
4. *Woodland Knits*, by Stephanie Dosen (Taunton Press)
5. *The Yarn Whisperer*, by Clara Parkes (STC Craft)

Unicorn Books & Crafts Monthly Top 50 (January 2014)

1. *Knit, Swirl*, by Sandra McIver (Seastack Publishing)
2. *The Rhinebeck Sweater*, by Ysolda Teague (Ysolda Teague)
3. *Stitch ‘N Bitch: The Knitter’s Handbook*, by Debbie Stoller (Workman)
4. *Cast On, Bind Off*, by Leslie Ann Bestor (Storey)
5. *60 Quick Knits From America’s Yarn Shops* (Sixth&Spring Books)

stretch a newbie's skills with cables, bobbles and lace and suggest using trickier types of yarn such as mohair and bouclé. The second half of the book is aspirational, ramping up the skill level even more with intarsia, Fair Isle, all-over cables and duplicate stitch. (Indeed, the charming patterns in this section are likely to entice already proficient knitters to pick up their own copy of the book.) Wilkinson takes a stylish and creative approach to teaching knitting; while her book will undoubtedly bring new knitters into the fold, her take-no-prisoners attitude may be a bit too fast-moving for nervous newbies.

Fair Isle Style

By Mary Jane Muckelstone
Interweave Press/F+W Media;
\$24.95

ISBN: 978-1596688995

Designer Mary Jane Muckelstone



presents a new addition to Interweave's venerable "Style" series, a diverse

collection of 20 designs taking traditional Fair Isle knitting in new directions. She draws from a talented pool of designers for a few classic items (Elinor Brown's cap and scarf with XO motif and Carrie Bostock Hoge's booties with peerie motifs) and less-traditional garments, like Gudrun Johnston's fetching dress with colorwork yoke and Norah Gaughan's geometric shrug. Yarns range in gauge from fingering to worsted and include Shetland stalwarts as well as more modern fiber blends. Patterns are followed by a design notebook, with tips on stranding yarns, reading charts, making color choices and steeking.

Knitting by Design

By Emma Robertson
Chronicle Books: \$24.95
ISBN: 978-1452117393

If you aspire to design knitwear



to interest you in *Knitting by Design*. Emma Robertson takes the reader inside her design process, walking the knitter through 15 projects. Start with the kernel of the idea that inspired the garment, then take a look at the sketches, swatches and mood boards Robertson prepared. Consider the specific challenges presented by each project and how Robertson opted to address them, then knit up your own version of her design. The designer takes a breezy, confident approach to process, taking advantage of atypical materials (sewn-on leather elbow patches, say, or dip-dyes to add graduated color to a finished tank). The patterns include such accessories as hair clips and a turban, scarves and cowls, hats, cardigans, even shorts, all with a hip, urban vibe.

Op-Art Socks

By Stephanie van der Linden
Interweave Press/F+W Media;
\$24.95

ISBN: 978-1596689039

Sock designer *extraordinaire*



Stephanie van der Linden presents a striking collection of patterns inspired by the optical-art movement of the 1960s. It's always fun to see a designer find inspiration in unexpected places; in this case, van der Linden's own collection of op-art ceramics was the catalyst for the graphic colorwork and textured effects she incorporates into her delightfully complex patterns. Whether it's the swirling lines of the Crest socks, the interlocking

yourself or simply enjoy learning about the design process of professionals, you'll find plenty

motifs of Alhambra or the clever color-shifting Yaacov socks shown on the cover, van der Linden has created an outstanding collection of fresh designs to tempt even the most jaded sock knitter.

Knitted Shawls of Helga Rüütel

By Helga Rüütel and Siiri Reimann

Saara Publishing House; \$60
ISBN: 978-9949936335

This oversized book of Estonian lacework is probably not for the



casual shawl knitter; it doesn't include traditional project patterns or step-by-step instructions.

Instead, the book is more akin to a stitch dictionary, chock-full of the specific stitch patterns, charted and photographed, used by prolific Estonian designer Helga Rüütel in her extensive and beautiful body of work. (Readers are directed to the earlier *Haapsalu Shawls*, published in 2009, for general instructions on how to knit the traditional pieces it references.) Lace aficionados and fans of ethnic knitting traditions will be eager to delve into the intricate stitch patterns, a number of which incorporate more than 100 nups or bobbles! Written in both Estonian and English, the commentary that accompanies each pattern provides a window into Rüütel's inspiration, be it a delicious piece of Latvian chocolate, a farmer's field or a newspaper advertisement.

Take the Fear Out of Cables

By Jill Wright
Leisure Arts; \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1609004132

If cables make you cower, then you'll want to take a look at Wright's new book, which demystifies those twisting stitches with the help of 10 attractive patterns. She starts slowly, walking newbies



through a sample cable complete with plenty of illustrations. She follows up with an explanation

of chart reading, then ably explains how to work a cable without a cable needle. Wright's classic designs start simply (with rectangular garments including a belt and scarf) and build in complexity, concluding with a wrap, vest and sweater. The timeless designs will undoubtedly appeal to a wide audience while giving eager cabling a chance to build their confidence. A nice plus: links to videos on the Leisure Arts website that illustrate specific skills, a boon for visual learners.

Modern Baby Crochet

By Stacey Trock
Martingale & Co. \$22.99
ISBN: 978-1604683394



Stacey Trock's latest offering goes beyond the adorable crocheted toys and softies

she's best known for, expanding further into baby's nursery. A full third of the 21 patterns—all appropriate for either girls or boys—are blankets, from the Mondrian-Inspired Afghan in signature red, yellow, blue and white to the Asymmetrical Basketweave Blanket, which resembles a quarter of a traditional log cabin. True to its "modern" designation, the book's designs are clean and relatively simple, though there's room for crocheters to learn something new, from appliqué to surface embroidery. Adorable toys, mobiles, rattles and pillows round out the offerings and give plenty to choose from when planning a gift for your next baby shower.

YARN FORWARD

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Chain Gang

By Christina Behnke

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It's the rare knitter or crocheter who hasn't experienced the thrill of finishing a bulky-weight project in no time at all, only to realize with disappointment that the item is, well, bulky. Chainettes, however—formed from a knitted I-cord construction—boast all the size with a fraction of the weight. There's a shape, size and fiber blend of chainette for every crafter—just be sure to keep big-gauge hooks and needles in stock.

Part of chainettes' allure is the inimitable fabric they create: Stitches are perky yet soft, as if the edges have worn away.

Plymouth Yarn Company Baby Alpaca Magna (#10) (10 colors; 54.5yds/100g) can credit its patina to its 100% baby alpaca roving base, formed into a four-stitch I-cord where each "link" has room to bloom. The resulting yarn is so soft and light, it flows through your fingers like air. Though, as with roving, its surface is too delicate for sharp needle tips, the chainette construction generates inherent springiness and durability—unusual for unspun alpaca—and yields a plush, pillowy fabric.

A toothy 75% superwash wool/25% nylon blend supports the cagelike structure of **Wisdom Yarns/Universal Yarn Poems Puzzle (#6)** (8 colorways; 43yds/200g), a massive six-stitch I-cord. Thanks to its loosely knit construction, it can be worked on needle sizes ranging from U.S. 11 to 50—though why stop there? Its fanciful magnitude lends itself to all kinds of innovations, such as Cornelia Tuttle Hamilton's series of designs that show it woven across rows of slipped stitches to create bobbie-like puffs. Reach for this self-striper when you're dreaming up an avant-garde knit—or if you just want to knit a scarf in one sitting.

A light metallic filament runs down the center of **Berroco Flicker (#7)** (13 colors; 87% alpaca, 8% acrylic, 5% other; 189yds/50g), but the first thing you may notice about this yarn is its extraordinary springiness. This, plus its imperviousness to splitting—its lightly spun base is closely stitched into a two-stitch I-cord—makes it an ideal candidate for crochet. On a hook, fabrics, especially freestanding motifs, are rounded and delicately textured in a way that resembles coral formations; on needles, the alpaca halo blooms, rendering the softly hewn stitches in low relief so that the spongy fabric resembles sea glass or driftwood.

At first glance, **Schachenmayr Select Alegretto (#4)** (16 colors; 40% acrylic, 30% mohair, 30% polyamide; 34yds/50g) looks no different than some of its more opulent brushed-mohair cousins. That's because the dose of acrylic lets the mohair steal the show even while softening the yarn's overall hand. The product is a lustrous yarn so unabashedly fluffy, you'll hardly believe the low price point—or, for that matter, the machine-washability. Reach for this when you want to create a downy confection of a knit.

A base of unspun fiber gives **Debbie Bliss/KFI Paloma (#2)** (23 colors; 71yds/50g) a quietly gleaming, almost translucent appearance reminiscent of milk glass. While you may be tempted to knit it at heavy worsted gauge, heed the recommended U.S. 15 needle size: Thanks to 40% merino wool content, this elastic four-stitch I-cord will stretch across the needles as it's knit before bouncing back into a snug row of buoyant stitches. The other 60%—baby alpaca—is revealed in the resulting supple, drapey fabric.

The chainette incarnation from **Schulana/Skacel Collection's** kitten-soft kid mohair range, **Kid-Setair (#11)** (6 colors; 33yds/50g), owes its glossy sheen more to its 70% kid mohair than to its 30% silk content: Because the black silk binder threads are matte, the yarn takes on a mossy, rather than haloed, appearance. Mohair also helps this broad tube achieve its recommended gauge of 1.5 stitches/inch. Stick to stockinette and ribbing—knit/purl patterns can create gaps—and marvel at each mammoth, sculptural stitch.

Bergère de France Cocoon (#3) (17 colors; 70% acrylic, 25% mohair, 5% alpaca; 77yds/50g) reminds us that we'll never stop marveling at string's potential. It seems impossible that this yarn—constructed of a very openly chained lace-weight strand—would knit up into such a sturdy, crisp fabric. (Airy as it is, it can be worked on anywhere from a U.S. 9 to 11 needle.) Though a chainette this loose is wont to snag occasionally, the rusticated texture it creates—the chain's "links" push to the forefront of the fabric, an effect especially pleasing in purl stitches—is worth the extra attention.

Thanks to a higher proportion of silk than that of its counter-

parts, **Silk Mohair Knitted Tube** from **Habu Textiles (#9)** (60% mohair, 40% silk) boasts a wonderfully satiny hand, its peach fuzz of fine mohair imparting a buffed pearlescent effect rather than a halo. While it's not a yarn you'll use for large-scale projects—due to its high-grade fiber content, it's sold by the yard rather than the skein—it's a natural for little luxuries. We'd gladly trade a strand of pearls for a crochet chain stitched in this airy treasure.

Zealana Air Chunky Weight (#1) (9 colors; 159yds/50g) looks and knits like a tubular cable-spun yarn, despite its loose two-stitch I-cord construction—and that's just the first of its enigmas. While the 20% mulberry silk content makes it slippery, the 40% cashmere fibers cling together, bolstering stitches. But the true star here is the lusciously soft, warm brushtail possum

(the remaining 40%), which blooms at the forefront of the fabric, diffusing imperfections and adding depth to stitch patterns. In spite of its tender, inelastic nature, it works up into a springy, pill-resistant fabric that frogs and re-knits effortlessly.

Imagine a smooth, even, marshmallowy substance that drapes gently over every curve. No, not fondant—we're describing the fabrics that **Cascade Yarns Cloud (#5)** (31 colors; 164yds/100g) can create. The blend of 70% merino wool and 30% baby alpaca strikes that sweet note between structure and drape; the fibers are spun before being knit into a squared-off two-stitch I-cord, which augments their natural luster and establishes a uniform strand. Because of this, it performs almost like a worsted spun, knitting or crocheting into crisp stitches—yet the lightweight, delicately pebbled fabric it creates is something all its own.

Seventy percent baby alpaca gives **Classic Elite Yarns Chateau (#8)** (8 colors; 98yds/50g) its supple hand and delicate halo, but it's the other 30%—bamboo—that defines its character, creating sumptuous drape. The plant-based fiber reduces overall bounce—though this being a chainette, not elasticity or stitch definition—meaning this yarn is best suited to needles in the U.S. 10–11 range. But where you might lose structure, you'll gain strength—reinforcing the alpaca against mid-knit fraying—and satiny shine.

Part of chainettes' allure is the fabric they create: Stitches are perky yet soft, as if the edges have worn away.



The National NeedleArts Association

BY PATTY PARRISH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In Support of Retailers

TNNA is always looking at ways to add more value to our membership services and improve the overall experience at our trade shows. One of the most important benefits for our retailer members is "The State of Specialty NeedleArts," a comprehensive survey of needlearts consumers, retailers and wholesalers. Last year's survey results included a new feature: 36 product-segment-specific business-tool documents dealing with such topics as "Effective Social Media" and "Pricing That Makes Money." Both the survey results and the business tools can be used for marketing, strategic planning and so much more; find the information at TNNA.org.

Survey results consistently show that new products drive consumer purchasing, and our trade shows are a great place to see what's new in the industry. In particular, Friday night of the weekend convention is devoted to spotlighting these items. Sample It! sets the tone for the evening—wholesalers sell samples

of featured products, giving retailers the opportunity to test-drive the items before placing a large order. (Ninety wholesalers participated in Sample It! at our winter show in San Diego.) The popularity of this event continues to grow, and the buzz and excitement are contagious.

In addition to Sample It!, the Yarn Group's fashion show in San Diego was one of our best yet, with kits for a few of the runway garments raffled off to retailers in attendance. The fashion show is the place for yarn suppliers and designers to highlight their newest wares. Outside the yarn product segments, the Needlepoint Showcase allows designers to show off finished products and designs. If you haven't attended one of the Friday-night opening events, you're definitely missing out.

TNNA continues to support a host of consumer outreach programs. One such program was Spinzilla, Spinning & Weaving Group's inaugural event, in which competing teams challenged each other to see who could spin the most yarn in one week. More than 1.3 million yards of

fiber were spun and \$6,000 was raised for the NeedleArts Mentoring Program (NAMP). This year, Spinzilla will take place from October 6–14 during National Spinning and Weaving Week. With this new infusion of funding, NAMP and TNNA will develop a strategic plan to grow the program and teach more young people the needlearts. (If your store is interested in participating, contact us at info@needleartmentoringprogram.org.) TNNA will also continue to exhibit and teach at Maker Faires, where we have introduced and taught more than 15,000 people to knit, crochet, spin and more.

Stay tuned for further updates, and we urge you to attend our fall trade show, to be held May 3–5 at the Indianapolis Convention Center. If you are not currently a member of TNNA, join today; you will 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 or call (800) 889-8662.



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Knitting and Crochet: They're Good for You!

All of us in the industry have heard about, or experienced personally, the health benefits associated with knitting and crochet. Proponents talk about how these crafts help them find calm and focus, and even how it helped save their lives. Stress relief and creative fulfillment consistently rank as the top reasons people do these crafts in CYC's consumer research.

At the council's annual meeting last spring, Dean Blumenthal, Lion Brand Yarn Co.'s executive vice president and COO, presented a forceful argument, supported by facts and video, about how it was time that the industry started promoting the health benefits of these needlearts. He pointed out that while the industry does not have the financial resources to fund clinical studies, we could aggregate existing data to present a cogent narrative about the reported benefits of these crafts.

In a follow-up session, Blumenthal, along with Karin Strom, editorial director of Interweave's

Yarn Group, and Darren Cohen, All American Crafts' CEO, mapped out a strategy for how to proceed. Initially they gathered all the articles and video clips on the subject they had collected over the years. We then posted on social media, asking for personal stories and seeking medical professionals who had firsthand knowledge of the benefits of knitting and crochet.

With all this information in hand, we hired veteran journalist Leslie Petrovski to pull together the scientific and anecdotal information and write a compelling article. Along with the information we provided, Petrovski's own investigations unearthed more stories and contacts. [Read Petrovski's article on page 52.]

The article served as a framework for our new health initiative, while anecdotal evidence and contacts continued to grow. For instance, YMN Editor in Chief Erin Slonaker provided yet another critical lead when she sought out Dr. Alton Barron, an orthopedic specialist in New York City, to address her own hand pain. She was relieved when Dr. Barron prescribed exer-

cises instead of surgery and enthusiastically encouraged her to continue knitting. It turns out he and his wife, Dr. Carrie Barron, have written a book called *The Creativity Cure* and are strong advocates for activities like knitting and crochet to help mood, mind and body. Erin put us in touch with the Barrons to help further our research.

The Barrons were important medical contributors to a video the Council recently produced called "Changing Global Health One Stitch at a Time," which is now posted on our website health page and on YouTube. On the page we also ask people to share how knitting and crochet have benefited them.

The Council was so delighted by the results that we hired Ocean Public Relations to help us spread the word. We know knitting and crochet are good for us. Now we want the world to know.

The Craft Yarn Council was formed in 1981 to raise awareness about fibers. Visit craftyarncouncil.com or knitandcrochet.com for more information.

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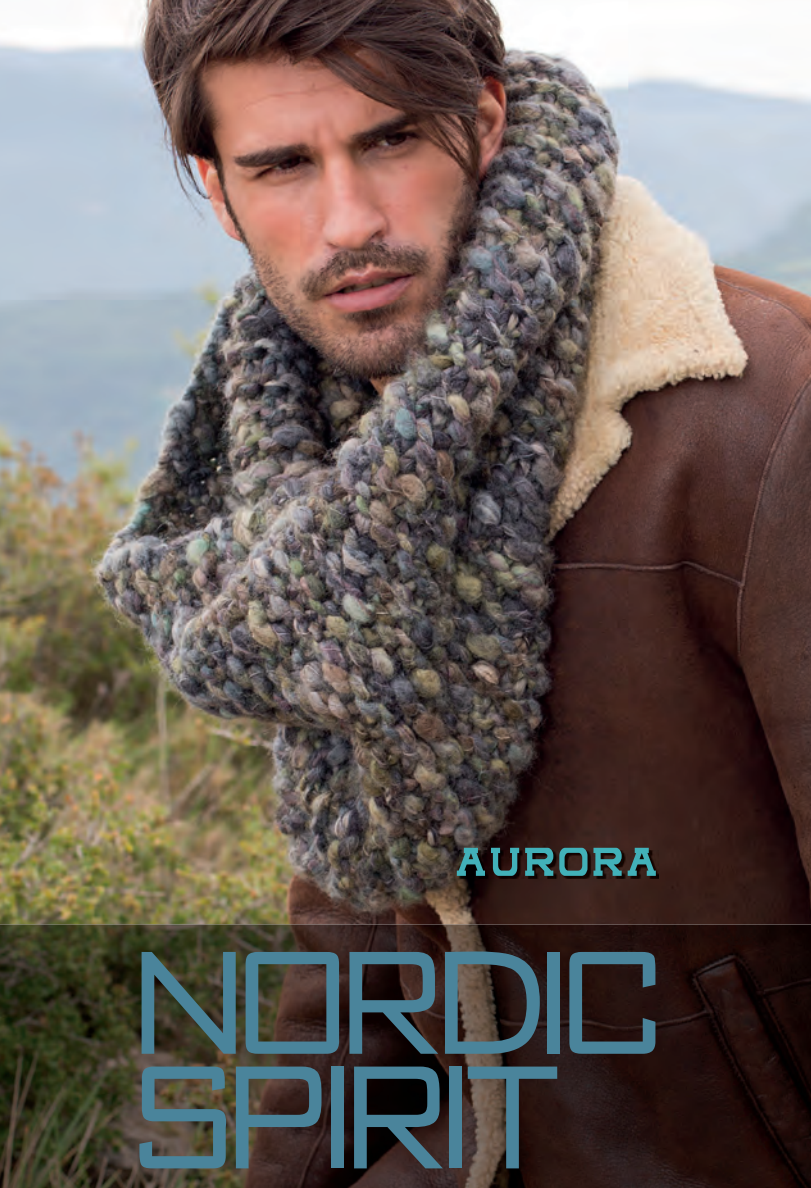
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The Benefits of Being a Member

The National Needlearts Association's Yarn Group was created in 1995 specifically to promote the growth of yarn-related industries and strengthen yarn-related businesses that are members of TNNA. Yarn Group's initiatives promote awareness and appreciation of yarn crafts by forging partnerships among retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers' reps, designers and teachers, all of whom are welcome as members.

While wholesalers, designers and teachers are prominent members, retailers are at the heart of our efforts. We've designed a menu of benefits specifically for our retail members that will be available at the summer trade show in Indianapolis (May 3–5). There, members will be able to:

- Meet in the new Yarn Group Member Lounge to participate in a full schedule of activities and network with others in our industry. We will provide free Wi-Fi in the lounge for Yarn Group members.
- Participate in a professional development program of business classes taught by industry

experts.

- Repeat the fun of our San Diego fashion show, where model kits for some garments walking the runway were raffled to retailers who attended. We've changed the eligibility for the summer show so that only members of Yarn Group can enter the raffle.

- Join in The Quest, an interactive exploration of the trade show floor replete with prizes, including a certificate for complimentary hotel nights at a trade show hotel and prize baskets full of new and exciting products.

Join Yarn Group or renew your membership by June 30 and you'll enjoy benefits through September 30, 2015. That's an additional four months of membership just for joining or renewing now. Says Cheryl Nachtrieb, owner of The Recycled Lamb in Golden, Colorado: "Being a [Yarn Group] member makes me a part of a community of manufacturers, wholesalers, importers and retailers that support me as a yarn retailer. The contacts I've made help me make decisions on product and provide marketing

opportunities I wouldn't otherwise have." Find a membership application form at tnna.org/members/group_select.asp?type=8385.

Mark your calendars to attend Yarn Group's semiannual meeting at the show on Sunday, May 4. Join a room full of passionate colleagues who want what you want—to grow their businesses and be a part of shaping our industry.

You can join the conversation outside the show as well. Check out Yarn Group's social media sites to keep up with news and to source content for your own outreach campaigns. Let us do some of the work for you. Our username is YarnGroup on Twitter, Instagram and Rebel Mouse; find us on Facebook at facebook.com/pages/Yarn-Group/132083723483950. We're also curating yarn-related links on Pinterest under the username TNNAYarnGroup. We have our own Ravelry group at ravelry.com/groups/yarn-group and we even use Tumblr, at yargroup.tumblr.com. Retweet, share, like, repost. Be a part of the action and help Yarn Group spread our love of yarn.

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The Knitting Guild Association

BY ARENDA HOLLADAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Forming a Successful Partnership

The Knitting Guild Association's mission is to ensure that knitters have the very best skills possible and to grow the numbers of accomplished knitters around the world. Well-educated knitters are most likely to frequent yarn shops and buy high-quality products, creating a natural opportunity for LYS owners and TKGA to work together.

TKGA's programs provide a variety of educational options. Our conferences are built around exceptional instructors, including members of our own Master Knitting Program committee. In addition to an enticing array of technique classes, events also feature a marketplace where retailers sell their wares to a highly motivated audience. In 2013, attendees represented most states and many countries.

Shop owners planning to attend the Knit & Crochet Show in Manchester, New Hampshire, in July would be wise to book their booths early. Space is limited, and the Manchester show is the only TKGA conference scheduled this year. The event is a wonderful opportunity to introduce your store and its unique flavor to a whole new

customer base. Shop owners have told us that not only do they sell more product in one week-end than they would in their stores; they also build customers for life.

Retailers can sell TKGA's quarterly *Cast On* magazine, our membership publication, through the retail auto-ship program. For \$35 for each of the four annual issues, you will receive six copies of the magazine to sell in your shop. Your customers will find the content to be a great resource in expanding their expertise. Written by members of our Master Knitting Program committee, the two lessons per issue cover a technique (cable knitting, for instance) or a design component (top-down sweaters and the like). Each lesson is accompanied by one or more patterns. Plus, as a retailer carrying *Cast On*, you'll be listed in every issue and on our website, so our 10,000 TKGA members can find you when they travel the country. Some shops put kits together for the garments in *Cast On*; knit up a sample and sell the yarn and a copy of the magazine together. We offer special pricing for additional copies of *Cast On* in bundles of six

for retail shops and instructors who wish to utilize our patterns and lessons in classes. And did we mention that when you carry *Cast On* in your store, you automatically become a member of TKGA, free of charge?

One of the strengths of TKGA is its member guilds. Consider lending out your store space for a meeting of your local guild. Once you welcome members to your shop, don't be surprised if many become regular customers. Offering a discount to TKGA members is another great way to entice people to visit.

TKGA would love to welcome your shop as a partner in our efforts to improve the skills of knitters everywhere. We offer a wealth of resources to local yarn shops and hope you'll join us in this win-win opportunity to bring more knitters through your door.

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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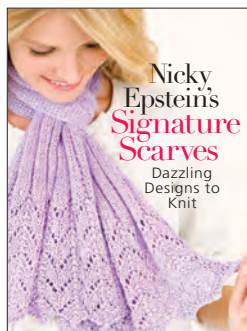
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Show Your Stuff

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 January 2015 issue, call Doreen Connors at (212) 937-2554 or Rose Ann Pollani at (212) 937-2557.

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Crochet Guild of America

BY KAREN KNIES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Leading the Charge for Twenty Years

Members of the Crochet Guild of America celebrate a 20-year milestone this year. As we look back over the past two decades, we see how far crochet has come. Yarn shops have seen a steady rise in crochet-related sales, from patterns and books to the threads, yarns and hooks that are the tools of the trade. Popular crochet designers have seen their careers skyrocket with the help of media and social media promotions. Established magazines have been reenergized and new publications are thriving.

The runways at the Knit & Crochet Show, which is co-sponsored by CGOA, feature garments and techniques that elicit oohs and aahs from crocheters and non-crocheters alike. Classes at the show and workshops offered by local CGOA guilds or shop members are growing a more sophisticated crocheter who is looking to learn once-rare skills like Tunisian crochet and broomstick lace; tackling Aran crochet cables and traveling stitches; and par-

ticipating in the CGOA Masters of Advanced Crochet Stitches and Techniques program in surging numbers.

Crocheters also continue to prove they have large hearts. Their passion to help others grows every year and has been expressed in thousands upon thousands of crocheted hats, chemo caps, premie outfits, scarves, lap robes, afghans and more donated by individuals and local chapters to organizations down the street or across the seas. We sincerely hope that charity crochet will continue to drive yarn sales for the next 20 years and more.

It's no surprise, after so many years of association service, that CGOA has its finger on the pulse of crochet. Members are more close-knit and supportive of their organization than ever before. Volunteer board members and committees are vitally active and eager to keep up with the times. Social media provides a unique cohesion among enthusiasts while also spreading news and trends at digital speed. Crochet abounds on Instagram and Pinterest.

We at the CGOA are thrilled to be celebrating our 20th anniversary, although, as founding member Gwen Blakley Kinsler says, "we find it hard to believe that in a flash of threads, stitches and, most of all, friends, so many years have passed! Where did the time go?" In honor of this milestone, CGOA has created a special committee comprised of past presidents to plan for this important occasion. We held a Twentieth Anniversary Logo contest; CGOA member Donna Wolfe created a wonderful logo using the traditional colors of a 20th anniversary: green, platinum and white. Look for the logo on pins and many other items that will help spread the word that the CGOA—and the noble craft of crochet—is alive and well. Thank you for your continuing support of crochet and CGOA as we begin our next 20 years.

For more information about the Crochet Guild of America, visit crochet.org or e-mail CGOA@offinger.com.

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Making a Name for Yourself

The pros and cons of registering your shop's name as a federal trademark.

BY TOM SPERANZA

Before the rise of e-commerce, local yarn shops truly were local, drawing their regular customers from the immediate area. For this reason, a shop's name did not need to be completely original. It didn't matter if 15 unrelated "Yarn Palaces" were located around the country: Chances were good their customers would never overlap.

But today, e-commerce sites draw buyers from around the country—and the world. Nearly every LYS has a website touting its product lines and promoting classes and events. With on-line competition and the use of social media, establishing a unique brand identity (and keeping other shops from copying it) is crucial.

Nuts and bolts

Federal trademark registrations are issued by the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office (PTO). To qualify for federal registration, your shop name must be used in interstate commerce. Any LYS with a website or print advertising that is seen in more than one state would meet the standard.

Applications can be submitted online at www.uspto.gov. On the application, you tell the PTO when you first used your mark in interstate commerce and include "specimens," or examples of how the mark is used (e.g., labels, advertising, screen captures of web pages). The application is assigned to an examiner who analyzes the application based on the requirements of federal law, most importantly ensuring the proposed mark is not "confusingly similar" to an already applied-for or registered mark.

Once an application gets through the examination process, it is published in the PTO's weekly "Official Gazette," and owners of prior registered trademarks have a specified amount of time during which they can file objections. If no one files, the PTO issues a registration certificate after the objection period expires. The process can take up to a year; registrations last for 10 years and can be renewed for additional 10-year periods.

The PTO also has a procedure for registering marks on an "intent-to-use" basis. This enables you to register a name for use in the future.

The good, the bad and the ugly

The benefits of federal registration are numerous. Once you are given federal trademark protection, you have the exclusive nationwide right to use

that name in connection with the goods and services described in your registration. That means you have the right to prevent others from using any marks that are "confusingly similar," but only if they started using their infringing mark *after* the date your mark was registered. For example, if you successfully register the mark "Yarn Palace" for knitting retail store services and you learn that an LYS called "Palace of Yarn" has opened, you can send the owner a cease-and-desist letter demanding that the shop change its name or face a lawsuit. If that store opened before you registered your mark and it isn't located in the same area from which you draw your customers, your registration can only prevent Palace of Yarn from expanding the use of its name beyond its normal customer territory.

Another benefit of registering a name is that the PTO's online database acts as an automatic deterrent to later entrants. A quick search at www.uspto.gov can show new owners which names to avoid. Having this national "monopoly" can boost your shop's recognition factor. As a result, customers may find you more quickly when searching online.

The biggest downside to federal registration is the cost (see box). Craig Rosenfeld, owner of Loop in Philadelphia, decided the expense outweighed the benefits: "I sometimes wish I had trademarked the shop's name, simply because social media has made it confusing for customers when they see an online knitting- or crochet-related reference that isn't my shop. But the investment is sizable, especially when faced with all the other costs of opening a business."

You'll have to decide whether to hire an intellectual property attorney to take you through the application process. If you decide to go it alone, your chances of success may be lower, particularly if any tricky issues arise. Steve Elkins was glad he hired a trademark lawyer when he decided to register "America's Yarn Shop" for his store, Webs, of Northampton, Massachusetts: "The trademark office initially denied registration, I think because they thought the mark was too descriptive. Our lawyer was able to convince them that we had been using it long enough that the phrase was associated with Webs in the knitting world."

Even if you successfully trademark your shop's name, a hidden cost is the added burden of enforcing your rights: Federal law requires a trademark owner to use reasonable efforts to protect those rights. If you don't protect your hard-earned registration from infringers, a new shop with a similar name—and anyone else who uses a similar name later—will be able to argue that you waived your rights by failing to enforce them.

Establishing a unique identity in any marketplace is hard work. In the highly decentralized yarn market, it's even more difficult to build a brand that crafters instantly recognize. If, however, you are willing to make an investment in protecting your name and policing it against infringers, a federal trademark registration can be a valuable part of your marketing tool kit.

Tom Speranza is a partner in the business and finance department of the Philadelphia law firm Kleinbard Bell & Brecker, where he practices corporate and intellectual property law.

The Costs of Registering a Trademark

- **Filing Fees:** At press time, the USPTO charges \$325 for each class of goods and services for which you seek registration. The PTO divides the business world into 45 classes. An LYS would, at minimum, register its name for retail store services (Class 35). If the same name is used as a private label for yarn or needles, you'd file for two additional classes (23 and 26). If the LYS provides knitting classes and/or hires guest speakers on knitting, the application could cover educational services (Class 41).
- **Legal Fees:** An intellectual property lawyer's services range from \$200 to \$750 per hour depending on the lawyer's experience and your region. Most IP lawyers will quote a firm budget or a flat fee, but estimate at least four or five hours of the lawyer's time.
- **Search Fees:** A commercial search firm, which specializes in looking through the USPTO's vast database and other, non-public databases for existing trademarks, costs about \$750, but using one gives you greater assurance that your desired name is available and won't infringe a third party's rights.

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Poster Child

Hanging an OSHA poster is not only the law. It also makes good business sense.

BY JACKIE PAWLOWSKI

It's a familiar scenario for every small business owner: a piece of mail arrives, bold lettering blazoned across the front, crying, "OSHA COMPLIANCE—IT'S THE LAW!" You could be facing penalties in excess of \$10,000! Buy this poster/brochure/training now! "It can strike fear in your heart—but is it true?"

All small business owners should be familiar with the federal Occupational Safety & Health Act of 1970, commonly referred to by its acronym, OSHA, which requires employers to provide a safe working environment for their employees. The actual statute reads: "Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees; [and] shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act."

After this rather general law was passed, a large number of regulations were issued providing detailed guidelines spelling out exactly how employers should comply. These regulations are to some extent based on common sense: For example, an employer is required to provide access to clean water and a bathroom and to prevent exposure to harmful chemicals or other dangerous items. OSHA also gives employees protection under the law to report dangerous workplaces and request inspections without retaliation or discrimination. Unless you're a safety manager at a large manufacturer, that's probably the extent of your familiarity with OSHA.

What you may not know is that as an employer, you are responsible for displaying these rights in a public and easily visible place—the wall in a break room, for instance—on an ongoing basis. Stephen L. Raymond, who practices labor and employment law in Haverhill, Massachusetts, says that this requirement extends to "all persons (including any company or corporate entity) engaged in a business affecting commerce who has employees, excluding federal or state government. Therefore, any private business with an employee must display [an OSHA] poster."

The good news is that a business does not need to make a purchase to comply with the notification requirements. The OSHA website provides a free poster that employers can download at osha.gov/Publications/osha3165.pdf. But to

complicate matters a bit, 20 states have their own workplace safety laws that augment the federal statutes, and thus publish their own free versions of the poster. If your shop is located in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Washington or Wyoming, you can find your state's version of the mandatory workplace safety poster at osha.gov/dcsp/osp/states_posters.html.

In compliance

Are there consequences for not displaying the poster? Employers can be fined, although enforcement is spotty. Still, Raymond advises that "adhering to OSHA's requirements makes good business sense. It reduces direct costs (e.g., insurance) as well as indirect costs (e.g., productivity), with, in most cases, fewer additional fees. The U.S. Department of Labor's OSHA website itself has a good deal of free, useful information for the small business owner, including its *Handbook for Small Businesses*."

Raymond believes that all employers should understand "the importance of having a procedure in place to handle in-house employee complaints. It should first effectively investigate and eliminate any threat to safety and health, but also prohibit any kind of retaliation for such complaints. Open communication fosters improvements in the workplace and should be encouraged."

For small businesses, this can be as simple as discussing "health and safety" at your staff meetings. This ongoing discussion should emphasize your commitment to workplace safety and encourage open communication about ways you can work together on the issue, be it handling large boxes on high shelves, managing dye pots or navigating a dark, crowded storeroom. It's also important that you demonstrate your own commitment to safety by always following the rules or procedures you've established for the business.

In the context of workplace safety violations, the largest financial risk for a small business is probably not OSHA penalties, but the risk of insurance claims. A single workers' compensation claim will not only increase an employer's insurance premiums (which could significantly affect a business's bottom line) but may cause the employer to incur substantial legal fees.

The most important thing an employer can do to mitigate this financial risk is to create a safe workplace—tools for lifting heavy boxes, ladders for reaching heights, etc.—and an environment in which employees have a clear way to communicate concerns without fear of disfavor. And while hanging a poster may not actually affect workplace safety, the presence of one may help demonstrate a business's good-faith effort to comply with the law, supporting the business's defense in the event of a claim against it.

The bottom line: Displaying an OSHA poster is not only the law; it costs little or nothing and can help mitigate or prevent costly insurance claims—all of which makes good business and financial sense. And just as important, it's the right thing to do.

Jackie Pawlowski is a consultant to small business owners. Her passion for making things prompted her to join Amy Herzog Designs in early 2013.

The Letter of the Law

Knowing the difference between what the law requires of an employer and what is simply materials marketing or a sales pitch for a seminar isn't always easy. Here's a quick rundown of what you should know.

OSHA requires all employers to:

- Display the free, downloadable OSHA poster in the workplace.
- Create a safe workplace environment by preventing exposure to harmful substances or dangerous situations.
- Provide a way for employees to communicate concerns about workplace safety to their employer without fear of job loss, reduced hours or other unfavorable treatment.

OSHA does *not* require employers to:

- Purchase compliance brochures or packages.
- Attend expensive safety trainings or seminars.

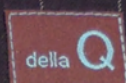
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www.osha.gov/Publications/osha2209.pdf

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To Kit or Not to Kit?

They're the knitting equivalent of a cake mix: all the ingredients a knitter needs in one handy container. Should you consider creating a few of your own?

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

When Lisa Marazzo came across an adorable baby sweater pattern that used partial skeins of several colors of yarn, she knew her customers would want to knit it—but also knew that buying full hanks of all the required colors would push the price to nearly \$100. She decided to offer a kit, winding off partial skeins in each required color and selling them bundled together for \$35, a much more attractive price point for a baby item. The kits sold well, and Marazzo has gone on to successfully offer other kits at her Caldwell, New Jersey, shop All About Ewe.

One-stop shopping

As Marazzo discovered, kits are a convenient way to package supplies for a project, particularly in cases in which a design calls for multiple colors or small amounts of many yarns. Buying individual hanks for these projects can be cost-prohibitive for budget-conscious knitters, provided they can even find all the constituent parts.

Halcyon Blake of Halcyon Yarns in Bath, Maine, has been selling kits for twenty-some years, first offering beginner's kits to new weavers, then expanding into knitting and felting projects. "Kits are especially helpful to those just starting a craft," she explains, "because they help prevent frustration at the beginning of the learning curve. We believe they increase the number of people who continue to learn—and to shop." Blake has done particularly well selling what she calls "project kits," a set of easy-to-choose yarn alternatives that go with a specific pattern.

Kits—the perfect impulse buy—can also help an indecisive shopper. As Blake says, "They're a fun and easy choice for the person who feels like making something but is stumped by where to begin or is pressed for time."

Nancy Queen of NobleKnits in Exton, Pennsylvania, agrees: "Kits take the guesswork out of a transaction. The knitter doesn't have to worry about selecting the right yarn or pattern; it's all done for her." That makes kits a perfect choice for a gift as well as a handy souvenir for knitters who visit yarn shops when they travel.

Hassle-free knitting

If you're considering adding kits to your inventory, proceed slowly. Nancy Queen points out that kits take up a lot of square footage and are less versatile than skeins of yarn—a kit makes only one item, whereas balls of yarn can be used for a variety of projects. She advises testing the waters by purchasing premade kits from wholesalers: "Buy small quantities and position them at a key area of your store, such as near the cash wrap." She also advises LYS owners to analyze their customers' preferences. While Queen has successfully sold kits for everything from sweaters to knitted jewelry and afghans, what will sell "depends on a lot of different things: knitting trends, the season, the types of customers who visit your store, what they like to knit."

Lisa Marazzo agrees. By trial and error, she's found that particular types of kits work especially well: "We do best with kits for baby or toddler clothing, two-ball scarf kits, and shawls that use two different types of yarn held together."

Meredith Kermicle of Knaughty Knitter in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, suggests offering kits that are unique to your shop, things "you can't get just anywhere." She often writes her own patterns to go with a particular yarn. She's seen success with a "Scarf of the Month" club, for which she designed new patterns; customers could get the pattern only by purchasing the entire kit. And don't forget samples: Having a garment to display always makes a kit more enticing to shoppers who like to see exactly what their finished project will look like.

Last, carefully consider price. Premade kits purchased from a wholesaler will come with an MSRP and ready to sell, but LYS-specific kits made by a shop can carry hidden costs. If you're breaking skeins into smaller balls for multicolored kits, factor in the time your staff will spend doing so. Packaging—many kits are offered in special bags or boxes—will also add to your costs. Halcyon Blake notes that her shop does not mark up prices on kits. "We do not price over the raw ingredients and costs, figuring instead that kits will pay off in increased visibility and an easy decision for the customer, thus producing greater sales overall."

The Whole Kit and Caboodle

Tips for creating killer kits:

- **Use kits creatively and highlight slow-moving inventory.** Lisa Marazzo of All About Ewe counsels, "Make a sample, keep it near the kits, and use the kits to move yarns that aren't moving on their own." Meredith Kermicle of Knaughty Knitter clued in to the "magic ball" trend, creating single balls by tying segments of different yarns together, allowing knitters to make a multicolored scarf from the yarns without buying separate balls. "They sold like hotcakes," she says.
- **Don't forget the packaging.** Nancy Queen purchases kits sold by wholesalers and likes when they come in attractive bags or boxes, even (in one case) in Chinese takeout-style containers. Halcyon Blake packages her shop's kits with a label on a special box. "We think [special packaging for kits] creates a more unique presentation and a higher perception of value," she notes.
- **Think about the supply chain when you pick yarns for kits.** Halcyon Blake has on occasion created and marketed a kit successfully, only to find that one or more components had been discontinued by the manufacturer. "For this reason, we now offer kits using yarns from longtime suppliers who don't change things every season and/or from our own yarn lines," she notes.
- **Build in some flexibility.** Lisa Marazzo uses semi-transparent bags to hold her kits, making it easy for customers to swap out colors as desired; she has also offered kits for the same project using alternate yarns that sell at different price points. "People appreciate having the choice," she notes.
- **Play fair when it comes to copyright.** Federal copyright laws prohibit you from making photocopies of another designer's patterns to put in your kit. Refer back to the article "Copyright," by Cheryl Kremetz, in the August 2012 issue of *Yarn Market News* for more information on copyright restrictions.

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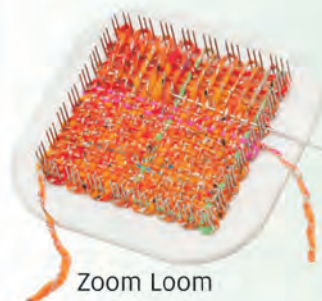
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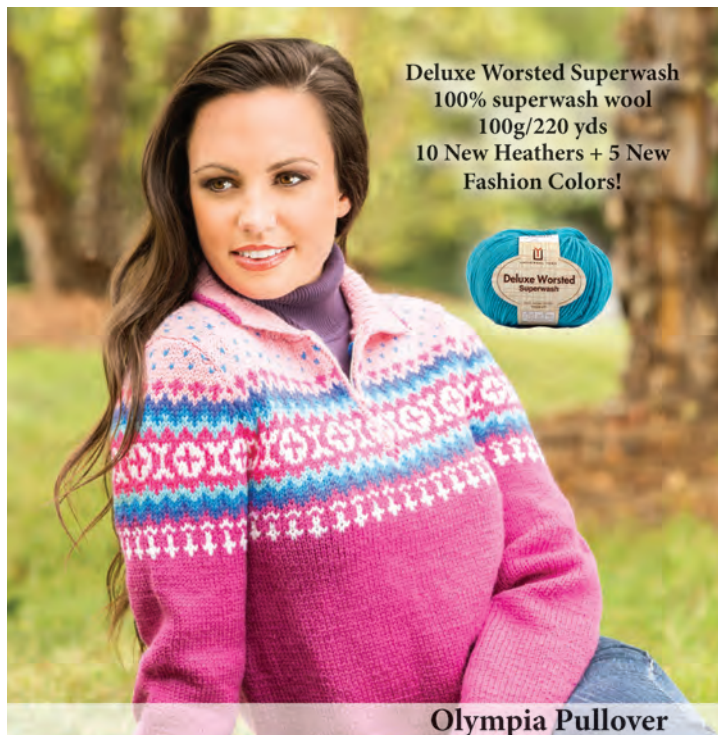
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Mission Control

So much social media, so little time. Maintaining your shop's online presence can be daunting. Lighten the load with aggregation tools.

BY MAYA MACKOWIAK ELSON

Of course you're on Facebook. You tweet. Instagram? You're there, too, sharing snapshots of your shop. Perhaps Foursquare is now a helpful business tool as well. But let's face it: Keeping up with social media in all its many incarnations can be a challenge. If the inefficiencies of maintaining all of your accounts has you feeling downright antisocial, maybe it's time to get organized with a social media management tool.

Anytime, anywhere

Also called social media aggregators, these tools were created to help busy users, especially businesses, save time. The idea is to gather all of your shop's social media accounts into one place from which you can manage posts, comments, analytics and more. Easily managed in your browser, many aggregators are also available as apps so you can keep up with your accounts from your mobile device.

For Barbra Pushies, co-owner of the Los Angeles-based Yarnover Truck, using a social media aggregator "keeps everything neat and easy to see on one page. It's the easiest way to manage Twitter. The scheduling function is a huge time saver, and being able to post to multiple accounts at once is great."

One of the most popular reasons for using a social media aggregator is that it lets you schedule tweets and status updates to post at a future time. "I can't post around the clock manually, but our customers are on social media 24/7," says Dena Childs, web marketing manager at Webs yarn shop in Northampton, Massachusetts. "My goal is to reach more of our customers by scheduling posts during times they're actually using social media, which often is not when I'm working."

Data gathering

Some social media aggregators also offer customizable analytics reporting, which allows you to see who is talking about you online, what links they are clicking most often in your posts, and which posts are getting the most attention. Some integrate Google Analytics directly, while others offer their own unique reporting service. Ultimately, the insights these data provide can

help you hone ever more effective social media strategies.

Who's who

Several aggregators offer free accounts, a great place to start if you want to test the waters before you commit to a monthly fee (if it's even necessary). If you find it useful and are interested in additional features, most services offer an upgrade for a monthly fee. Here are a few services to check out:

- **HootSuite** (hootsuite.com). The free basic service this product offers makes it one of the most popular among small businesses. With it, one user can manage up to five social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter and Google+, scheduling posts for each. A pro account with extra features like enhanced analytics reporting and advanced message scheduling starts at \$8.99 a month.
- **Scruddle** (scruddle.com). This program makes your inbox the hub for all your social media. Use it to schedule posts, respond to comments and share links via your own personal email. A basic Scruddle account is free; the upgrade to an ad-free account with a few extra features (such as data searching) costs \$4 a month.
- **Buffer** (bufferapp.com). If you are looking to simply schedule posts and track their success, this product's free program offers a no-fuss approach. Upgrade to "the awesome plan," which allows more accounts and users, for \$10 per month. Buffer also offers business-centric plans with more robust analytics and support starting at \$50 a month.
- **Postling** (postling.com). While this service also allows you to schedule posts and organize your social media content in one place, it offers a little something extra with its ability to track what people are saying about you on sites like Yelp, CitySearch and TripAdvisor. It also integrates with email, so you can post and manage conversations directly through your inbox. The first month costs \$1 and \$10 per month thereafter.
- **SproutSocial** (sproutsocial.com). This option is pricey—packages start at \$39 per month—but offers helpful tools and support at even the most basic level. Not only do you get a one-stop dashboard; you also get comprehensive

reporting tools, advanced publishing features and access to SproutSocial support staff, who are there to offer help and advice.

If you're not sure if an aggregator is right for you, you're not alone. Wendy Ellis of Lancaster Yarn Shop in Intercourse, Pennsylvania, says that for now, she'll make due on her own. "But as we get busier and the online world gets noisier," she says, "I'll seriously consider using an aggregator. We'll let the future decide."

Maya Mackowiak Elson is a Brooklyn-based freelance writer.

Best Practices for Social Media Scheduling

Unsure whether post scheduling is right for your shop? Consider this: A survey conducted by the marketing software company HubSpot revealed that those who schedule their social media posts generate three times the leads as those who do not.

Taking the time to consider what to post and when to post it increases your chances of creating an impact with your message. You can more easily maintain a consistent voice, optimize posts by focusing on keywords that matter to you, and stay on your customers' radar, whether you are online when they are or not.

Ready to schedule? Consider these best practices:

- **Set a schedule for your schedule.** To maintain a consistent presence, build just thirty minutes into your week to plan and schedule your updates.
- **Concentrate on the near future.** Schedule posts a week to 10 days out to ensure you don't miss an opportunity to promote something that pops up and that no prescheduled post becomes somehow undesirable, obsolete or forgotten.
- **Schedule during prime times.** Talk to your customers to learn what time of day they're usually online. Have your messages appear when they are most likely to be looking.

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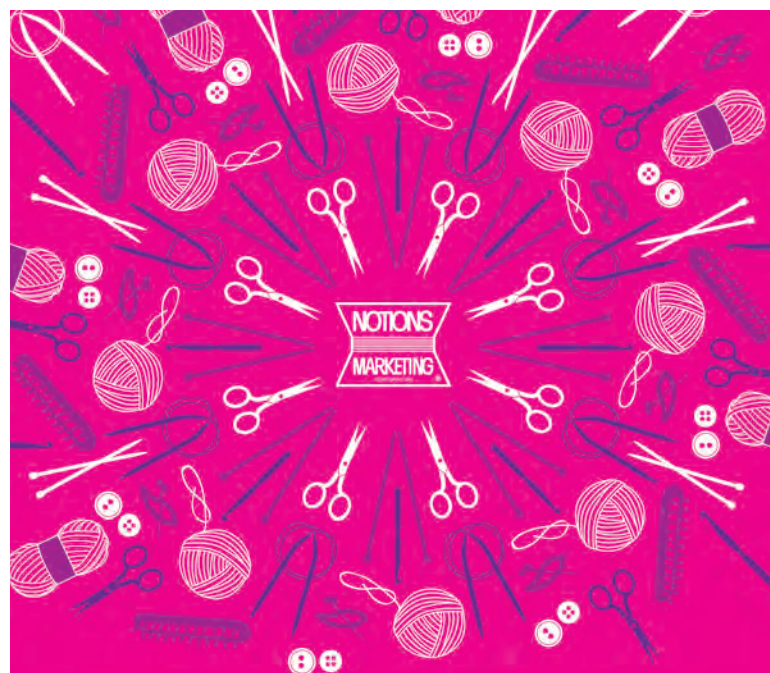
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Winding Up

Should you be winding yarn for your customers as a matter of course?

BY HOLLY RUCK

A walk down Park Avenue in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, takes you past rows of restaurants and shops. If you pause in front of one of those shops, Finely a Knitting Party, currently in its eleventh year, you're likely to see flashes of color and movement on the other side of the window. Says owner Cathy Finley, "Having my swift and winder up front attracts attention, and not only from knitters: When they're in use, they capture the eyes of everyone passing by. The movement, the light—it's exactly where a person tends to look. It makes you want to come inside and see what's happening."

Yarn winding is an important part of any knitting or crochet experience, especially since so many yarns are sold by the skein rather than the ball. Providing this service—or creating a comfortable store setup that facilitates it—is a great way to encourage community, teach a skill and offer a valuable service.

Big decisions

If providing this type of service is new to your store, the first thing you must decide is what you'll allow customers to do on their own. At Smoky Mountain Spinnery in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, whether or not an employee needs to be present for winding depends on the customer. "The locals—we just turn 'em loose," says owner Nancy Thompson. "But for new customers, we prefer that they don't wind on their own."

That policy is echoed at Finely a Knitting Party: "For us, the decision is made on a case-by-case basis," says Cathy Finley. "If it's a knitter who does most of her [yarn shopping] here, I'm fine with letting her wind her own yarn. But if the person is new to our store, I'll step in. One thing that's true for everyone is that yarn bought here has priority status."

Finley brings up a concern many store owners have: what to do about yarn purchased elsewhere. Some shops charge a small fee to wind the yarn. That's the policy at Smoky Mountain Spinnery. "We generally charge about \$2 to wind yarn bought someplace else, depending on the size of the ball," says Nancy Thompson.

Another issue to consider is the amount of time it takes to perform the task. Guidelines for

how many skeins a customer can wind at one time can help reduce backups. To alleviate the wait, a few stores, including Knit 4 Together in Dunlap, Illinois, ask customers to return at a later time to pick up the wound yarn. That way, staff can give customers their full attention and wind the yarn during slower times.

Many shops make it a standard practice to offer the service to all of their customers. At Finely a Knitting Party, "We offer to wind the yarn [at the time of purchase]," says Finley. "So many new knitters don't realize yarn needs to be wound, and they get very frustrated. They wonder why they weren't told when they were in the shop." For Claudia Bima, one of Knit 4 Together's five owners, it's a simple matter of good customer service: "We've always done it."

Setting it up

With all the different types of swifts and winders on the market, it's easy to find equipment that matches your budget and space constraints. To pick the right gear for your store—electric or hand-cranked ball winders and the like—think about the experience you're hoping to provide. If your aim is to get customers in and out of the winding station as quickly as possible, consider manning it with store employees and investing in an electric setup. "Adding an electric ball winder helped a lot," says Nancy Thompson. "I can start winding while helping another customer."

If your store environment allows for the slower pace of customer trial and error, consider the space as another learning area and set it up with hand-cranked tools. To help the winding process, Cathy Finley's station includes a five-step instruction card written by the shop's sales staff. "We encourage customers to take the time to learn how to do it on their own. The instructions are meant to support them independently." When choosing a designated space for winding, look at store traffic patterns and consider ease of accessibility. If your store sells a selection of winding equipment, stock it near the winding station for an added sales opportunity.

The finished product

After the yarn has been wound and is off the winder, it's time to send customers on their way. Tucking the original ball band into the center

of the freshly wound yarn is a great way to keep the skein's information close at hand. Claudia Bima suggests to her customers that they feed the freshly wound yarn through the cut corner of a plastic zip-top bag. "It's a nice way to keep your ball together if it starts to loosen as you knit."

Holly Ruck is a writer and avid knitter living in Brooklyn.

The Breaks

Yarn winding isn't a perfect science, and sometimes it can get a little messy. Try these tips for smooth winding—and satisfied customers.

To Wind or Not to Wind

Certain types of yarn work better on winding equipment than others. Slinky yarns, such as those made of rayon or metallic fiber, tend not to wind well on a machine. If you notice immediately that the yarn isn't staying in place either on the swift or ball winder, offer to help the customer wind by hand.

Problem Skeins

As every knitter knows, sometimes yarn just breaks. Skeins can have flaws that aren't outwardly visible. If yarn breaks during winding, assess the skein for future potential problems. If all looks good, continue winding into a separate, smaller ball. (Most knitters won't mind taking home two balls instead of one.) If it breaks again, though, replace the skein with a fresh one from your shelves. If the problem persists, contact the manufacturer.

Don't Be Tense!

To help a new customer learn about tension, have a few pre-wound balls of yarn on hand to use as examples—one that was wound too tightly, one that was wound too loosely, and one that was wound just right. If a customer is winding a yarn made of particularly soft fibers (think angora or bamboo), help her adjust the swift so that the tension is gentle and doesn't strain the yarn.



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Skacel Collection

Move over, Heidi and Tim: There's a new fashion competition in town.

BY DARYL BROWER

Will you swatch or will you watch?" That was the question asked by *The Fiber Factor*, a *Project Runway*-style knitting design competition that kept yarny types glued to YouTube for most of 2013. The concept was simple: Twelve budding knitwear designers, judged by a panel of industry experts, would work their way through six design challenges while knitters worldwide watched (and swatched) along. It was at once daunting, exhilarating and exhausting for everyone involved, but the payoff was sweet: buzz among knitting consumers, sales of kits for the challenge winners' designs, an all-expenses-paid trip to Germany for the winner, and improved brand recognition and a TNNa Business Innovation Award for the company that pulled it all together, Skacel Collection.

The idea for *The Fiber Factor* was one Skacel's owner Karin Skacel had been toying with for some time. "So many of us watch *Project Runway*, and we wanted something like it for knitters," she says. "I discussed the possibility many times with different people in our industry, but nothing ever came of it." It was also a regular topic of discussion at the company's staff meetings, Skacel recalls. "Finally, Chuck Wilmesher, our director of product development, said to me, 'It's time. I'll organize and orchestrate the whole thing if you'll work with me on it and approve the costs.' I couldn't say no to that."

Skacel says the goal of the program was multifaceted. "First and foremost, we thought it would be exciting and great fun to do," she explains. "We also hoped it would show the world that knitting is more than garter-stitch scarves. It's a fantastic form of art that incorporates technique, mathematics and spatial relations." But while enhancing the public image of knitting was a worthy goal, Skacel also saw an opportunity for the company to promote its products—especially its yarns.

"Everyone thinks of Skacel as a needle company," she says. "And we are. But we also distribute more than 100 fabulous yarns." *The*

Fiber Factor was a great way to get those yarns into the hands of knitters—not just the 12 contestants, but also those watching along at home.

While Skacel never regretted saying yes to the project, she admits that its execution entailed much more work (and a bigger budget) than she or anyone on her staff anticipated.

"We were only a few months into it when I realized the budget I'd allowed wouldn't cover even half a season," she says. "We really had a lot to learn, most of it by trial and error." The original plan, for example, called for recording the critiques of the judges, scattered over four



time zones, via the Internet. But the Skacel team wasn't happy with the results. "We realized it would be so much better if we had all the judges in one location at the same time, where they could all physically see and touch the garments." So airfare and hotel room costs had to be added.

The Skacel team took those unplanned expenses and efforts in stride. "I can't begin to count all the hours we put into this," Skacel says. For Wilmesher, *The Fiber Factor* became a second job. "He was maintaining and updating the website, coordinating yarn shipments so [contestants] got their packages at the same time, corresponding with fans, editing video content and lining up judges," says Skacel.



"And that's just part of it." She's quick to point out that the contestants were equally stretched. "I'm certain some of them were living off caffeine and adrenaline," she laughs. "But no one dropped out. That's impressive."

And it was. The videos earned 140,000 views by knitting fans, and the competition's Facebook page garnered nearly 3,000 likes. It's unclear at this point whether *The Fiber Factor* increased yarn sales, but it did get the word out that Skacel is more than just Addi needles. "Knitters are more

aware now that we carry yarn," Skacel says. "*The Fiber Factor* certainly put a spotlight on our company, and I think it has encouraged knitters to do some of their own design work. Did we educate the world about knitting? Maybe not, but there is always Season 2."

Yes, you heard right: There will be a second season, but it's going to be a while in the making. "We're going to spend the next year focusing on knit-alongs hosted by Season 1 contestants, including winner Lauren Riker, while we take the time to regroup," explains Skacel. And there will be changes. "We'll eliminate one or two contestants every challenge next time

around. This will make it more exciting, encourage even more creativity from the contestants, and help lower costs a bit, as each challenge will become a little less expensive to produce, at least product- and freight-wise."

But the biggest change Skacel hopes to effect is the involvement of the larger knitting industry. "If a small group of us at Skacel could pull off what we did, imagine what a collaborative group from our industry could do," she muses. "There is power in the masses, and that's what it's going to take if our ultimate goal is to wake up the world and show it that knitting is just as interesting as cooking. Can you imagine a knitting TV channel? What a wonderful world this would be!"

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India

Old traditions meet modern life.

BY ERIN SLONAKER

India is a changing country, at once modernizing and holding fast to traditions. But though the cities are growing at a rapid pace, still two thirds of Indians live in villages. This split, between modernization and a life less influenced by technology, seems to exist for India's knitters as well.

Those who live in the city have the Internet, and Ravelry, and all the outside influences they bring. These knitters have been introduced to circular needles, yarns of various fiber content, and more patterns than anyone could knit in a lifetime. Some of them learned to knit via YouTube. Traditional knitters, on the other hand, learned as children from their mothers or grandmothers. These women—for knitting is dominated by women in India, though in states to the east it is a pursuit shared by men—don't have access to anything but straight aluminum needles, and because there are few to no pattern books available, they make up patterns themselves or copy ones they see.

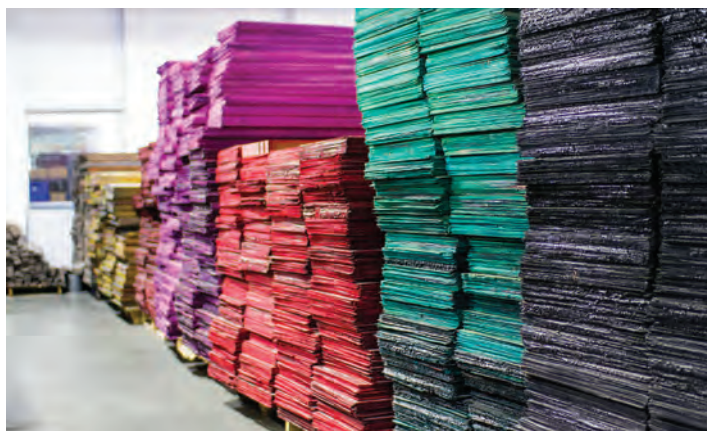
A universal issue for these knitters is the availability of product. "Rural women get their yarn and needles from the local yarn shops—you can find one in even the smallest of places. Most yarn shops stock single-pointed aluminum needles, and one can get a pair free if one buys a sweater quantity of yarn," says Priya Shashank, an avid knitter and consultant to India-based Knitter's Pride, maker of knitting and crochet tools and accessories. There are actually more than 20 shops that sell yarn in Delhi, though their shelves



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERIN SLONAKER

Though many think of India as a hot country—and summer in many areas is—northern and eastern India is mountainous and cool, and winters see temperatures in the 50s and lower throughout the country, making sweaters a necessity. Suman Sharma, who works in sales and marketing at Knitter's Pride, says, "You will hardly see hand-knitted shawls here. Women generally knit sweaters, caps, gloves, scarves and socks, either for themselves, for family or for friends." Priya Shashank agrees, noting that in the north, which experiences true winters, you see more hand-knit garments, and in the southern coastal areas, "where the weather is mostly hot and humid, people use knitting to make home décor and bags." Those who can't knit at all are not out of luck; they can buy hand-knit sweaters from yarn shops, some of which partner with knitters who make sweaters to order.

With such a long tradition of knitting in the country, it's no surprise that a company that first made its name making artist paintbrushes is now one of the leading manufacturers of knitting needles in the world. Knitter's Pride, based in Noida, just outside Delhi, makes 1.5 million needles (straight, circular, interchangeable) and crochet hooks each month—in materials ranging from bamboo to carbon and nickel-plated brass—though the factory's location in



Local Delhi knitters meet at a local café (top); a schoolgirl sports a hand-knit vest (above, right); Knitter's Pride's stock of wood for needles—enough for six months (above).

are not filled with the vast array of brands and yarns that American customers are familiar with. Acrylics are common, as are DK- and fingering-weight undyed wools, which local knitters make creative use of by dyeing them themselves.

At the Delhi Knitter's Ravelry group's monthly meeting, expats (from the United

States, Canada and France) and locals alike lament the issues associated with ordering online. "My biggest problem is with parcels getting lost in transit; this happened thrice last year to me," Shashank says. Shipping charges to India tend to be very expensive, and even paying a premium doesn't guarantee safe delivery. It's getting better, they say, but it means knitters must rely on what can be found locally.



a dedicated export economic zone in the city of Jaipur means Indian knitters don't find these products locally.

Still, the company is doing its part to give back to its home country by funding a rural school for children. Not far from Noida, the landscape changes dramatically, from bustling city streets to open fields of rice and other grain. These villagers—who had never seen a foreigner before Knitter's Pride organized a visit with American journalists—may now take advantage of the opportunities that the cities present, thanks to the education Knitter's Pride is providing. With students ranging

in age from 5 to 16, and a particular attention placed on the education of girls, Apna School is truly making a difference in these villagers' lives. Mr. Roop Jain, the company president, is strongly committed to educating girls and advancing their opportunities. He is also influenced by a friend, Dr. Mahaveer Jain (no relation), who has worked over the years within India's government to end child labor practices.

As India continues to grow and modernize, it will be interesting to see if one of its traditional crafts follows suit. In recent years, the number of young women picking up knitting has declined, because, according to Priya Shashank, "the young have money and can buy sweaters." On the other hand, as a more "modern" life takes hold, more Indians, as Shashank says, "may see knitting as a stress-buster and a means of creative expression," like she and so many other Delhi knitters do.

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BY DARYL BROWER

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GRAPHIC DESIGNER

■ **What one does:** Looking for an attention-grabbing logo or an effective ad? A graphic designer should be your first stop. These experts bring professional polish to everything from business cards to store signs and stationery. Graphic designers are often part of a larger design service that can encompass naming a company, event or project; consulting on strategy; building websites (more on that later); and even reviewing and editing copy.

■ **Why you need one:** A professional can lend clarity and consistency to your brand and help you stand out in a crowded market. "It's really difficult to step away from your own brand and see it for what it is," says Jen Neuhoﬀ, founder of Northfound (northfound.com), a graphic design company that's helped craft the visual presence of the Philadelphia yarn shop Loop; Black Bunny Fibers, a hand-dyed-yarn company; and designer Grace Anna Farrow's brand, A Stitch to Wear. "A good designer can think through your brand objectively, spot the holes and have strategies to emphasize what is working and bolster the weak points."

Neuhoﬀ points out that it can be tough for overworked business owners to keep visuals consistent. "Long hours make it easy to miss details," she says. "But design professionals live and breathe them—it's what we're trained to do. Your target audience may not realize you used the wrong dash or that you suddenly introduced a new color in a piece, but they know subconsciously that something is off."

Heather Zoppetti of Stitch Sprouts (www.stitchsprouts.com), a service that provides graphic design and editing services to knitwear designers and yarn shops, points out that a designer provides a level of professionalism that the average yarn shop owner or pattern designer is unlikely to accomplish on his or her own. "For many independent and small business owners, it's too costly to buy the software or invest in the training required for professional graphics," she says. "They make do with alternatives, and as a result they fail to present themselves in the best light." And that can hurt your bottom

line. "When [customers] perceive your brand as unprofessional, it takes away buying confidence, and they are less likely to spend money in your store or on your patterns," notes Zoppetti.

In a saturated market, first impressions count, and the initial glimpse a customer has of a product, logo or ad can make or break a sale. "Many in our industry have grown their businesses out of a hobby," says Zoppetti. That lack of business training, she posits, can lead to quick-fix branding. Bringing a graphic designer on board is particularly critical for shops in need of an update. "It's not uncommon for a client to want to completely overhaul his brand—pick a new typeface or color, redo his logo," she says. "As designers, it's our job to make sure that the brand evolves in a way—and at a pace—that makes sense. Do it too quickly, and you'll just confuse or alienate people."

Keeping your look consistent goes beyond stationery and shopping bags. Ads—print or web—should send a message that's of a piece with the graphics you've established for your store, and a good designer will know how to handle that. Hiring a pro will also ensure that your graphic is delivered in the format and quality required for the medium, be it a local newspaper or a national magazine. The varying specs for sizing, color

and format for print and web pieces can be baffling to those without a professional background. "A good designer will take into account things like margins, type sizes and styles, color formulas, paper, printing or screen limitations, and photo quality and resolution, all of which can make or break a design," Neuhoﬀ says. "You'll know your ad will look its best in the medium in which it's being presented."

■ **Where to find one:** Ask around. Are there businesses in your area with branded looks you love? Ask them who did their design work. The American Institute of Graphic Arts (www.aiga.org) maintains a database of graphic designers, along with job posting boards where you can locate pros looking for work or post calls for help. Does your local community college have a graphic design program? Ask about internships or other programs that link students with businesses in need of design services. Etsy abounds with artists offering inexpensive logo design services,

but take care: Many will simply slap your store name into an existing template and change colors to your liking.

■ **What to expect:** Be prepared to answer a lot of questions. "I ask about strengths, weaknesses, short- and long-term goals, perceptions, competition," Neuhoﬀ says. "I also talk a lot about the personality of the company, even if the company is just one person. We connect with brands because they remind us of people we know or aspire to be. Design today really is about experience. Something in the brand has to resonate with the consumer."

The purpose of all that questioning, says Zoppetti, who employs similar techniques, is to clarify what her clients are looking for. "Most people have only a vague idea of what they want," she explains. "My initial questions help them to focus their ideas and to realize their vision." When working on a logo design, for example, she'll ask clients for three adjectives that describe their brand. "Then we look at colors, styles, fonts and themes," she says. "There is a lot of back and forth via email."

Neuhoﬀ says she can usually get a pretty good idea of what will appeal to clients, and to their target audience, based on the answers to her questions. "I stew on their answers, research and sketch until I have a strong

sense of what I'm aiming for in my designs. In the end it comes down to the subtleties, like choosing to use one typeface in a specific weight instead of a similar typeface with a slightly different feel. The little things add up to tell the story."

Once the designer has a grasp on what you want, he or she will come back to you with concept drafts (usually you'll have three to choose from). You'll discuss your reasons for liking or disliking the concept and together work to refine the piece. A proof of the final graphic will be sent to you for review. Depending on the system you've set up with the designer, he or she will either give you the final files or manage the print process for you. "We want to ensure that the finished piece looks right and gets delivered on time," says Neuhoﬀ.

■ **What it costs:** Anywhere from \$300 per job to several thousand dollars depending on the size and scope of the project.

WEB DESIGNER

■ **What one does:** Looking to launch a website, revamp a blog or move from one platform to another (Typepad to Wordpress, for example)? A web designer will make sure you have an online presence that's consis-

Those who helm an LYS are self-reliant types. And is it any wonder? A small staff (or none at all), long hours and tight budgets are part and parcel of the yarn business. Accustomed to performing as a jack-of-all-trades, many shop owners think nothing of slipping into the role of web designer, display specialist and graphic artist. Looking for a new logo? Download free design software and do it yourself. Need a website? Your nephew said he'd help you build one. Shop window in need of an overhaul? Grab one of your regular staffers and ask her to pull something together.

Doing it yourself may save a few bucks, but it will certainly cost you time—and possibly sales. When it comes to crafting an image and building a brand—and all of the tasks mentioned above are key to doing so—some jobs are better left to the professionals. Here are three worth calling in.

tent with the other visual aspects of your brand, is easy to navigate, works securely and is adaptable to other platforms.

■ **Why you need one:** In a word (or two): time and expertise. “There are tons of tools out there that help people to build their own sites, and a lot of them are great, but a web-design professional can do it more quickly and efficiently,” says Carrie Coker Bishop, a web designer (and avid knitter) at Identity Web and Photo (identitywebandphoto.com), whose clients include the shop Hidden River Yarns in Philadelphia and designer Amy Herzog. “For example, I’ve been working with Wordpress for years, so I know its quirks and tricks and capabilities.”

As with graphic design, time is of the essence. A basic website can take a minimum of 20 hours to create, including the design process, developing the theme and implementing it—and that’s with a trained professional at the helm. Few shop owners have that kind of time to spare. “It can take less time or it can take more,” says Bishop. “It really depends on what functionality clients need—do they want a shopping cart or store?” Extra features above and beyond just a blog and informational pages on a site mean additional hours—and an additional need for tech-savvy.

There’s also the speed with which things change in the digital world to consider. To be truly effective, websites have to work on a variety of platforms: computer monitors, mobile phones, tablets. New technologies—like responsive design, which automatically resizes web pages to whatever size browser the viewer is using—are emerging all the time. “A professional will be up on the latest trends,” Bishop says.

A web design pro will also be well versed in security. “When you’re using a blogging platform, you can easily do a Google search on how to do something, but it’s so easy to find outdated info, and you can leave your site open to spam and other security issues,” Northfound’s Jen Neuhoﬀ cautions. “And it can be expensive to deal with these issues once they’ve occurred.”

■ **Where to find one:** As with graphic design, word of mouth may be the best way to go. Gather a list of websites and blogs you find appealing and find out who did the design work (there’s usually a credit at the bottom of the page). Many graphic design firms also specialize in web design. If you’ve found someone you like for those services, inquire about their virtual work. Even if they don’t do it themselves, they should be able to recommend a reputable source. Sites like Behance (behance.net), Dribbble (dribbble.com) and Elegant.ly (elegant.ly) can also connect you with skilled designers in search of work. No matter where you source your professional, make sure he or she has the experience and skill set to effectively work with the platform you’re using.

■ **What to expect:** Bishop starts by asking clients to send her a list of sites they find appealing. “They don’t have to be yarn-related,” she says. “Just any website they think looks great.” This helps the designer get a sense for what appeals to the client. “Most clients come to me with an idea of what they want,” Bishop says. “Sometimes they just know what they *don’t* want, and that’s really helpful too.”

You’ll also discuss what you want from the project. Is it a stand-alone blog? An overhaul of an existing website? Will you want shopping capabilities or other features, now or in the future? Once those questions have been answered, the designer will provide mockups for review. “These are usually just static images to give us a jumping-off point for further design discussions,” say Bishop. “We do a few revisions from there, and then we decide together on a final design.” When the look is finalized, the designer will build a working site.

■ **What it costs:** \$500 to \$5,000 or more, depending on the tools and features you want included on the site.

VISUAL MERCHANDISER/STYLIST

■ **What one does:** These design specialists are trained in the placement and presentation of merchandise within your retail space for maximum visual impact. They usually won’t offer advice on floor plans or fixtures (the professionals who handle those tasks are known as retail or commercial designers), but they will make sure the items you are selling in your store

are shown off in a way that will compel customers to make a purchase.

■ **Why you need one:** Display is an art in which not everyone excels. “Retailers know their products, but they [often] don’t understand how to lay out a store space to make it work or how to present those products in a way that entices a customer to buy,” says Debi Ward Kennedy, a retail design specialist who shares her wisdom and experience at debiwardkennedy.com. Designers work from the basic principles of good visual design—something many retailers aren’t trained to do.

And while you or a talented employee may have a knack for pulling together a pretty display, a visual merchandiser is trained to go beyond that. Visual merchandisers, Ward Kennedy explains, approach store design from the perspective of making the whole shopping experience a rewarding one for the customer. “Ease of navigation through the space, visual cues that help their search, enough room to browse and look around without being intruded on by other customers—these are all part of the equation,” she says. “A store needs to look great, but more importantly, it needs to work well for customers and for employees.” There’s also the advantage of seeing your store from the perspective of an outsider. Being less familiar with the layout and contents of your shop, a professional stylist brings a critical eye to your inventory, assessing where your shop’s strengths and weakness lie where visuals are concerned.

To be effective, displays should be changed frequently, yet few store owners have the time or inclination to revamp on a regular basis. “Display styling should be an ongoing process,” Ward Kennedy says. “In retail, where the whole industry revolves around ‘the newest thing’ every single day, retailers must create fresh, new, visually exciting displays on a consistent basis. It’s paramount to success, and without it, stores get stale and customers get bored—especially in the age of digital visual stimulation.” Revamping and refreshing displays, she explains, is the equivalent of the “she looks ten years younger!” makeover. That means new window displays every month (Ward Kennedy says every two weeks is preferable) and the refiguring of high-traffic zones weekly. Hiring a professional to take care of that for you ensures it will actually get done. “Updated displays are the way to keep your customers engaged and excited.”

■ **Where to find one:** Ward Kennedy suggests local colleges as a source for small retailers. “Fashion design courses almost always include fashion merchandising, with a focus on retail display,” she says. “Interior design courses often include commercial design with a focus on retail, and students are always looking to build portfolios.” Speak with the professors or instructors in those departments to find students who are interested and capable of lending you a hand.

Trade shows are another spot to find qualified retail design and display professionals—look to gift, toy and clothing shows. “The seminars and workshops offered at regional and international trade shows usually include someone who is talking about retail display and/or retail store design,” says Ward Kennedy. “After the presentation, talk with the speaker about her availability for design consultations—or ask for recommendations of designers they trust.”

If all else fails, Ward Kennedy says an online search will turn up reliable resources. “There are websites, blogs, Tumblr and Pinterest pages that provide resources from basic to advanced in the area of store design and display,” she says. “My own retail design blog is one of those.”

■ **What to expect:** Your display or design professional will talk to you about colors, image and the kind of tone you want to set for the store. You’ll tell her about the products you want to promote and why, and she will come back with sketches and swatches of ideas for display. If you are looking for a complete design overhaul, you’ll talk about wall colors and improvements to the floor plan. You’ll also want to discuss how long and how often you expect your relationship with the designer to continue. Will this be a one-time engagement that involves a major overhaul of your store design, or will you establish a regular schedule that has the designer come in biweekly or monthly to freshen things up?

■ **What it costs:** \$35 to \$100 per hour depending on the experience of the designer and the scope of the project.



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The Brave New World of Money

Is cash still king in our technology-driven world?

By Leslie Petrovski

Some of you may be old enough to recall when supermarkets didn't take credit cards. Or how you used to write checks instead of swiping your debit card. Or when you had to have correct change to feed a parking meter.

How we pay for stuff is changing. Credit cards, debit cards, gift cards, prepaid debit cards, not to mention mobile wallets—which allow you to link credit cards to a smartphone app that you can use as a payment device—are making it necessary for retailers to rethink things at the cash wrap.

Show me the money

Today, the likelihood of receiving cash payment for a sweater's worth of yarn has decreased dramatically. Fifty years ago, folks pulled out greenbacks to pay for about 80 percent of their purchases, but these days, people use cash less than one third of the time. Javelin Strategy and Research found that in 2012, both credit and debit cards were used by purchasers at a whopping rate of 62 percent (32 percent for credit cards, 30 percent for debit cards). Cash came in a distant second at about 27 percent, with old-fashioned paper checks used only a fraction of the time. Javelin projects that the use of checks and gift cards will drop to even lower levels over the next four years.

Some of these sweeping changes are demographically driven. Stacy Klaus, who owns The Knitting Nest in Austin, Texas, observes that the three checks she took on a recent Wednesday morning were all written by women over the age of 60, one of whom confided that she still sends checks when she orders by catalog. Older customers, she says, tend to write more checks.

On the other hand, Millennials (ages 18 to 29) love debit and prepaid debit cards. Scarred by the Great Recession, young

people are either leery of credit, already strapped by student loans or simply can't qualify for credit cards because of heightened industry scrutiny. They are also more likely to be willing to pay fees for prepaid debit cards and check-cashing services to avoid divulging the personal information necessary to open bank accounts and waiting in line. As a result, this enormous cohort—estimated at about 80 million people—is more likely to live a pay-as-you-go lifestyle.

A report by the credit-rating firm FICO entitled "The Young and the Cardless" indicates that young people increasingly aren't carrying credit cards. In 2012, the percentage of 18-to-29-year-olds who didn't have even one credit card grew to 16 percent, up from 9 percent in 2005. According to FICO, "the impact of the recession seems to have had a pronounced effect on young consumers' attitudes toward credit. These results are consistent with reports indicating that younger consumers are more likely to use debit cards



than credit cards for purchases. They may also reflect the growing use of mobile payments by this younger generation."

Ta ta to the till

Retailers are responding to this move away from currency by taking the "cash" out of "cash register." In 2012, Urban Outfitters recognized the opportunities in this brave new untethered world by announcing that it was "out of the register business." Instead of traditional registers, the hipster retailer has armed sales associates with iPod Touch devices and iPads, which can be mounted at the cash wrap or held by a salesperson. The Apple devices take up less room and are much cheaper than traditional registers, plus they allow sales associates to research products for customers on the sales floor and clinch the sale with a simple swipe. Though mobile processing currently accounts for only a tiny fraction of retail payments, Javelin Research predicts that by 2018, mobile payments will grow to \$5.4 billion.

You don't have to be a huge retailer to buck the register. Back in 2010, Square Inc. launched its cute-as-a-bug cube that turns a smartphone or tablet into a mobile processing platform. Crafterpreneurs and other small retailers jumped on it as a low-cost solution for accepting credit cards at shows or in shop.

Co-owner of the nomadic Yarnover Truck in southern California, Maridee Nelson uses Square as her credit card processor. Overwhelmingly, Nelson says, customers use plastic instead of cash to pay for their goods from the roving shop, and given the nature of the system, she has no way of knowing whether she's swiping a credit or debit card: "In my world, a card is a card." While most customers find the system easy to use, a few older stitchers had a hard time signing on the iPad screen. Adding a stylus eliminated their discomfort.

Nelson's customers use mobile wallets as well, which obviate the need for carrying cash or cards. Through the Square Wallet app (mobile wallet apps are also available through other providers including Google, PayPal and various banks), customers can link to their credit cards and upload personal photos. When it comes time to pay at a Square-enabled vendor, all they have to do is check in through their phones. A customer's name and photo pop up on the

shop's iPad screen, the cashier checks that the photo matches the customer's face, taps the screen, and the card is charged automatically. "It's not that common yet," Nelson says, "but it sure is convenient, because you don't have to have your credit card with you."

Mary Penxa, owner of Two Rivers Yarns in Brunswick, Maryland, finds that fiber festivals are the perfect place to use mobile card readers. Penxa's shop participated in the Shenandoah Valley Fiber Festival last fall, where she accepted cash and cards through the Intuit GoPayment card reader, which syncs up with her QuickBooks point-of-sale/inventory system. Interestingly, Penxa found that while only 15 percent or so of her bricks-and-mortar business is in cash, festival customers by and large trade in hard currency. To prepare, she outfitted two cash boxes with \$100 each in an assortment of ones, fives and tens and quarters, nickels and dimes. When one box filled up with cash, she stashed it in a safe place and began working the second. By the close of the festival, she had banked a lot of cash while still offering her customers the convenience of using their cards.

Cash-less complications

While the convenience and ease of using this technology make it appealing to small businesses (shop owners who already own an iPad can get started with a free Square reader and POS app), there are times when the technology works better than others. During the holidays, a thirty-something shopper in Manhattan waited while a sales associate at a large retailer struggled to get multiple mobile scanners to work. The shopper ended up leaving the store without making a purchase. "I got so frustrated," she says. "I decided I didn't need the item that badly."

Credit card processing fees, which can range from about 2.3 to 3.5 percent per transaction, are another reason not every retailer embraces credit cards. Discounter Smiley's Yarn Store in Woodhaven, New York, doesn't take credit cards at its physical location, only online. "We couldn't maintain the prices we do if we had to pay the merchant fees," explains Smiley's Trudy Edelman, who says she doesn't think they lose sales because of the practice. When customers ask to use credit cards, Edelman directs them to nearby banks and ATMs.

"I don't like paying merchant fees," Mary Penxa admits. "But this is the modern world, and there is not one item I sell that anyone needs. You have to understand that yarn is a discretionary purchase, so you have to make it as easy as possible for customers to buy something."

Use it or lose it

JoAnn Zimmerman, who owns Stash in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, finds that her customers are predominantly paying with plastic nowadays. Zimmerman pulled up records from PayGo, her point-of-sale system, which showed that between October 1, 2013, and January 23, 2014, 88 percent of the transactions in her shop were credit-card-based (Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, et. al) and the remaining 12 percent were cash. (Because she doesn't want to run to the bank, Zimmerman doesn't accept checks.)

For retailers looking into payment types, there is also the credit card premium phenomenon to consider. It illustrates that how people pay plays a role in how much they spend. In study after study, researchers have found that people will spend more for a single item or per transaction when paying with plastic. Dun & Bradstreet, who maintain data on these kinds of business decisions, demonstrated, for example, that consumers tend to spend 12 to 18 percent more when using plastic.

"I have certain customers who like to pay with cash, but most people use cards," Zimmerman says, "which is fine with me. Because to be honest, they spend more when they use a card."

A 2011 study from the *Journal of Consumer Research* demonstrated that not only do people spend more when they pay with credit cards; they also think differently about the products they're considering. Cash buyers tend to think about whether they're getting value for their dollar; credit card

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The Truth About

Knitting

It's Good for You!

HOW KNITTING CAN IMPROVE
YOUR MOOD AND MIND

BY LESLIE PETROVSKI



Last spring, the Craft Yarn Council's board decided that it was time to gather together all the existing research on the health benefits of knitting and crochet. Knowing it would strengthen the entire industry if this information were disseminated to the world, the Council hired YMN Contributing Editor Leslie Petrovski to write a white paper on the findings.

We at Yarn Market News also believe in spreading the word. To help us do that, the Council granted us permission to reprint the article here. CYC will be doing more to get the word out in the months ahead, creating new awareness and new knitters and crocheters. Keep up with their findings and initiatives at craftyarnncouncil.com/health.

"Is knitting therapeutic? Heck yes. It's a proven scientific fact, just like we know that chocolate and red wine are good for us. Since turning my life over to yarn, I've talked to thousands of knitters who claim it's cured everything from gout to their weight problems. I can't speak to all cures, but knitting can certainly improve one's mental health. I know it helps mine." So says Clara Parkes, author of *The Yarn Whisperer: My Unexpected Life in Knitting* (STC Craft/A Melanie Falick Book) and the founder and publisher of *Knitter's Review*. Personal testimonies, anecdotal evidence and medical studies all back up Parkes's claims.

In 2007, Renee Magee was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The disease affects the central nervous system, and she describes the experience of her illness as "like having pregnancy brain—only it doesn't go away." Magee, though, has a secret weapon in her health arsenal: knitting needles.

"I've found that it's really good for the brain to work on something for which you have to focus," says the 36-year-old knitter. "You're following through on something and you're following a pattern; it's mental exercise."

Magee is not alone in her assessment of the craft's palliative effects on the mind. Knitting has been called the "new yoga" for good reason. Famous for its relaxing, meditative qualities, knitting increasingly is being used in hospitals, clinics, schools and even prisons to help people lead healthier, happier lives. And there's data to prove it.

"Knitting saved my life," says Liat Gat, who runs the video instruction site KNITFreedom.com. Admitted to a clinic in her twenties with a full-blown eating disorder, Gat, a lapsed knitter, started stitching again when the facility's craft volunteer came around with yarn and needles. Soon she had countless projects going and was helping other women fix their mistakes. And within weeks she was out of the clinic and working at a yarn shop.

"I could help people and make a difference," she says, "and it gave me a job."

Gat's experience of knitting her way out of an eating disorder has scholarly precedent. A 2009 study published in the journal *Eating and Weight Disorders* showed that when 38 women with anorexia nervosa were taught to knit and given free access to knitting supplies, they reported significant health improvements. An impressive 74 percent said knitting lessened their fears and kept them from ruminating about their disorders; 74 percent lauded the calming aspects of the craft; and 53 percent said it provided satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

"I didn't have a job; I had extra time," Gat explains of her recovery. "There's something to be said for filling your time with projects you care about."

Renee Magee, who with her husband owns Airship Printing, a screen-printing business in Castle Rock, Colorado, has created a line of goods under the brand Knerd Shop (knerdshop.com) that include a T-shirt, bag and stickers that read, "I knit so I don't kill people." Though the senti-

ment is tongue in cheek, it carries an element of truth: Knitters ascribe all manner of benefits to their craft—everything from alleviating depression, anxiety and pain to reducing boredom and the discomfiting effects of isolation.

Meredith Keeton, 32, knits to combat the loneliness she experiences when forced to stay home because of her rheumatoid arthritis. "One of the benefits of knitting for me is that because rheumatoid arthritis is an isolating condition, I can't be as social as I'd like. I'm often stuck at home by myself. Knitting gives me something productive to do with my time. It's definitely good stress relief and helps me keep my anxiety in check."

Cast on, calm down

Twenty-three years ago, knitting filled the time for Carol Caparosa,

whose infant daughter was born with congenital heart defects. Captive in waiting rooms and by her daughter's bedside for weeks at a time, Caparosa couldn't read or bear to watch TV. But after a friend gave her a hand-knit baby sweater, Caparosa, a former knitter, thought, This is what I'm going to do.

"My daughter would have these really long surgeries—eight or nine hours—and I would just sit there and knit. It was so calming."

In ensuing years, Caparosa felt a need to give back. Her daughter was thriving, so she returned to the pediatric intensive care unit at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, where her daughter had been a patient, and volunteered to teach parents and older children to knit. Her teaching gained a following, and she expanded her work to the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and incorporated her program as the nonprofit Project Knitwell.

In 2010, two Georgetown oncology nurses—stressed out by their jobs and graduate school—decided to use Project Knitwell for their thesis research. Personally aware of the incredible strain and loss oncology nurses experience, Lyndsay

Anderson and Christina Urso wondered whether knitting might mitigate some of the burnout—or "compassion fatigue"—these nurses were feeling. The grad students administered a survey to the nurses that measured burnout at two junctures: Before learning to knit and 13 weeks later, after learning to knit and working with Project Knitwell volunteers.

"Anecdotally we knew everyone on the unit was suffering," Anderson says. "Nobody was doing fine." Indeed, all 39 nurses who participated showed some degree of compassion fatigue in the "before" test.

Each nurse was taught to cast on and knit. In addition, Project Knitwell volunteers appeared regularly on the oncology floors to fix mistakes and assist the nurses in choosing new projects should they want to continue. Knit kits were also stashed in the oncology units, so nurses could knit spontaneously.

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(continued from page 53)

The results were significant. Each person's scores improved, especially the nurses who were the most burned out prior to the study. In answers to open-ended questions, nurses extolled the soothing rhythm of knitting and distraction from work-related fatigue. Though the sample was small, it was enough to convince hospital administrators to add Project Knitwell to its staff enrichment programs as well as provide sessions to graduating nurses.

"Oncology nurses really have nothing tangible to show for their work, because at the end of the day, their patients are still suffering," explains Anderson, who's now a family nurse practitioner in the hospital's Ourisman Breast Health Center. "But if you have something artistic to work on, it does give you some sense of accomplishment."

Use it or lose it

Common wisdom has it that crossword puzzles, sudoku puzzles and the like may help keep the brain sharp over time. But what about two sharp sticks and some yarn?

Yonas Geda, associate professor of Neurology and Psychiatry at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona, published a study in the spring 2011 edition of *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry & Clinical Neurosciences* that validated crafters of all stripes. His research showed that people who engaged their minds by reading books, playing games or crafting had a decreased risk of mild cognitive impairment, a possible precursor to Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

"The study suggests that engaging in certain types of mentally stimulating acts is associated with decreased risk of cognitive impairment," Geda says.

Their study looked at 1,321 adults ages 70 to 89, 197 of whom had been identified as already suffering from mild impairment. Both the normal and the affected groups were surveyed about their activities over the past year. The study demonstrated that using the brain may prevent impairment. The data showed that computer use, playing games, crafting, reading books and watching less TV resulted in a striking 30 to 50 percent decrease in the odds of developing mild cognitive impairment.

Though the study didn't examine exactly how these activities might protect the brain, it did reference other works suggesting that mentally active people overall might live healthier lifestyles, maybe exercising and eating better, or that cognitive activity might promote the development of new neuro pathways, or cognitive reserves. In other words, staying mentally active through knitting and reading, etc. makes "deposits" to an individual's brain "bank"; this can possibly buffer against Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

"Some people are normal when they die but show a neuropathological burden during autopsy," Geda says. "They have cognitive reserves. One of the theories is that engaging in mental activities stimulates the development of these cognitive reserves."

Why knitting?

Many theories exist about why knitting is good for the brain. Once a knitter has mastered the movements, the process is rhythmic and repetitive. According to the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, knitting's repetitious movements theoretically can elicit the famous "relaxation response," which is the body's counterbalance to stress, a state in which heart rate and blood pressure fall, breathing slows and levels of stress hormones drop.

"I use it in my own life as a way to calm myself down," explains Dr. Perri Klass, a professor of journalism and pediatrics at New York University and a physician who writes regularly for *The New York Times*. "I'm happier and calmer in many stressful situations when I'm knitting, whether it's sitting on a plane, delayed on the runway, or sitting at the bedside of a family member in a hospital or a medical office."

Dr. Teresa Anderson, a psychiatrist who practices in Cincinnati, Ohio,

recommends knitting and crochet to patients suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and major depression. A knitter and crocheter herself, she's been urging patients to stitch since medical school. "People recommend meditation, which is nice in theory, but some people are so worked up they can't sit still long enough to meditate," she says. "Knitting is what I consider an active meditation, something you can do and focus on, but it has a repetitive quality to it."

Knitting also involves following and recognizing patterns, learning new things, using both hands and math, lending it the capacity to improve fine motor skills while also keeping the mind active and engaged. Waldorf Schools, for example, teach children to knit before teaching them to read in the belief that knitting develops dexterity, focus and rudimentary arithmetic.

"Recent neurological research tends to confirm that mobility and dexterity in the five motor muscles, especially in the hand, may stimulate cellular development in the brain, and so strengthen the physical instrument of thinking," writes Eugene Schwartz in his article "Knitting and Intellectual Development" on the academic blog <http://millennialchild.wordpress.com>. "Work done over the past 70 years in hundreds of schools using the Waldorf method worldwide, in which first graders learn to knit before learning to write or manipulate numbers, has also proven successful in this regard."

Cassy Dominick, a Ph.D. student in counseling education at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, is about to embark on her dissertation research, in which she will study a small group of fourth and fifth graders and whether knitting affects their social skills, problem behaviors and academic achievement. "I really want this to be a springboard for my future career," she says. "I would love to put knitting and counseling together and make that my life."

The social aspect of knitting, too, plays into the craft's positive mental benefits. For people who like to knit in groups, knitting provides a social outlet, a critical element in maintaining mental health. And it allows for self-expression, charity and a sense of feeling productive.

"When we're in early stages of knitting and choosing yarn and designing, it's a whole different experience," says Susan MacLaughlin, who started the blog *Knit One, Health Too* after knitting her way through sequential bouts with a ruptured appendix and breast cancer. "There's something about the creative process. The heart opens

up and you go to another place. It's like how you feel after hiking up a mountain."

Changing global health one stitch at a time

Some of the most interesting work on the health benefits of knitting is being done in England, where Betsan Corkhill, a former physiotherapist with the National Health Service (NHS), is conducting research and aggregating data on knitting for health.

In 2002, having left the NHS, Corkhill started freelancing for craft magazines and was struck by the numbers of letters sent to these publications about the health benefits of crafts, particularly knitting. "My medical hat went on," she says, "and I began to research from there."

Convinced that knitting could play a role in Britain's healthcare system—if not the world's—she started a knitting group at the Royal United Hospital's pain clinic in Bath. The group, which has been meeting since 2006, has about 50 members who, Corkhill says, tout the meditative and social benefits of knitting as well as the fact that knitting helps to distract them from their pain. Visitors are often surprised, she observes, at "hearing all this raucous laughter in a pain clinic."

"Pain originates in the brain, not in muscles and joints," she says. "The brain has to pay attention to signals coming up from the body. If you're lonely or bored or unhappy, you'll experience more pain than if you're socially active and occupied, and that's very well accepted."



Today, as a result of her work, which she presented at an annual scientific meeting of the British Pain Society, more pain clinics in the U.K. are using knitting therapeutically.

In 2010, Corkhill, in conjunction with an occupational therapy lecturer from Cardiff University, conducted an online survey of the Stitchlinks.com community (Corkhill's website and clearinghouse of information about the therapeutic benefits of knitting). In the survey, they asked people why they stitched and about knitting's perceived effects on mood, feelings, thinking, social activity and skills. Within two weeks, they received a staggering 3,545 responses.

The study, which was published in the February 2013 issue of the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, revealed that the majority of knitters (here mostly white, female and avidly knitting) reported a significant relationship between knitting frequency and feeling calm and happy. Respondents who knit the most often said that knitting positively affected their cognitive functioning, helping them to sort through problems or think more easily.

Most promisingly, Exeter University just funded Ph.D. candidate Mirja Rutger and her main supervisor, Paul Dieppe, to study knitting groups, with Corkhill serving in an advisory capacity. The initial part of the study will work to tease out what actually is happening when people knit together—and how to measure it.

"Measuring a knitting group is considerably more difficult than measuring a new drug," she explains. "We are dealing with how people feel and interact and how this may impact their ability to live and manage life, as well as the more scientific issues of whether the actual movements are important in affecting the brain and the meditative-like state reported." Still, she says, "this a big step forward for knitting."

Knitting Better Lives

Knitting is being used all over the world to help people knit themselves into better places.

- **Knitamorphosis** (knitamorphosis.com) was founded by Karen Zila Hayes, a life coach, and offers knitting therapy programs as part of her practice in Toronto, Ontario, including Knit to Quit (a smoking cessation intervention), Knit to Heal (for individuals and families dealing with health crises), and corporate wellness for stressed-out workers.
- **Knitting Behind Bars** (knittingbehindbars.blogspot.com) teaches prisoners to knit in the pre-release unit in Jessup, Maryland. The inmates knit for charity.
- **Project Knitwell** (projectknitwell.org) provides knitting lessons to people experiencing stressful situations. Volunteers currently teach in hospital settings in the Washington, D.C., area.
- **Wounded Warrior Knitting Wednesdays** (ravelry.com/groups/wounded-warrior-knitting-Wednesdays) gives knitting lessons to family members, wounded soldiers and staff in the lobby of the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.
- **Yarn Alive** (yarnalive.wordpress.com) is a knitting group in Shichigahama, Japan, that has knit together since the earthquake and tsunami of 2011. The members all lost their homes to the disaster.

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF MONEY (continued from page 51)

users are more interested in product benefits. Knowledge such as this gives you a chance to alter your sales strategy. Suppose your customer is considering a pricey skein of cashmere. If you know that she is a credit card shopper, you can close the sale by stressing the unique qualities of the yarn—its micron count, its hand-dyed beauty and next-to-the-skin versatility. But if she usually pays with cash, switch to a value-based pitch: Remind her of the weekend's 10-percent-off coupon, or the many hours of knitting pleasure she'll get from the purchase of that single skein of yarn.

The beauty of choice

Cash may no longer be king, but it's still part of the royal family. In spite of all the excitement surrounding



digital wallets and mobile processing, people still overwhelmingly use cash for small purchases. Most LYSes sell many items with an MSRP under \$30—a pair of needles, a pattern or two, a skein (or two, or three) of yarn. Though some retailers, like Chicago's Standard Market food emporium, only accept cards, yarn shops may be better served by accepting cash (along with other media) as well given that so many purchases involve emergency needle runs and last-of-a-dye lot grabs.

Major customer data breaches at giant retailers including Target and Neiman Marcus may also be driving some customers back to bills and coins when shopping. According to a recent poll by The Associated Press and GfK Public Affairs and Corporate Communications, in the immediate aftermath of the cyber attacks, 37 percent of Americans made an effort to use cash instead of cards.

Sophia Burris, a 24-year-old Denver professional, uses her credit and debit cards more judiciously because of security concerns. For example, she hesitates to link her credit or debit card to phone apps for fear that if she loses her phone, she'll put herself at risk for identity theft.

Today, with so many payment options available, people like Burris can mix and match, opting to use credit in some contexts, cash or check in others. Burris sends checks to her landlord (and to her mom for her share of the family cell phone plan), uses her travel rewards credit card to pay for most things, and reserves her debit card for use at the ATM and to pay off her credit card, a strategy that earns her additional reward points on the debit card. At Starbucks, she pays with her smartphone, which links to her reloadable Starbucks Card, garnering her free drinks. Cash, she says, keeps her on the straight and narrow when she's out with friends.

"With a credit card, it's 'out of sight, out of mind,'" she says. "I don't know how much I spent on a drink if I'm not paying attention. But if I have a \$20 bill, I can say, 'I don't think a \$15 drink is what I'm going for today.'"

Mary Penxa of Two Rivers Yarns says she made the decision when she bought the shop to accommodate different kinds of payments to oblige as many customers as possible. Unlike the previous owner, who refused to take checks, she accepts them, along with Visa, MasterCard and Discover. In four years, not a single check has bounced.

In a world in which the retail business gets more and more competitive, Penxa's "give the customer what she wants" approach is a sensible one. To keep cash flowing, she stocks her till with about \$100—an amount she considers excessive but has served her in good stead.

"I probably don't need to keep that much," she says. "But then this happened: Right at closing, one minute before 6 P.M., a customer came in to buy needles, asking if I would mind taking a \$100 bill. I was able to make change and thus make the sale."

Catch the Rainbow

A prism captures all the colors of the spectrum; Laura Bryant has been busy expressing herself in all the colors at Prism as the company's founder and president. Originally trained as a traditional fine artist, she now works with a canvas of yarn. Erin Slonaker sat down with Bryant to find out about her creative work on the occasion of the Prism's 30th anniversary; read more about the company's beginnings on page 9.



Where did you learn about dyeing yarn, and to what do you attribute your keen color sense?

I had learned dyeing practices at the School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan [now the Stamps School of Art & Design], but it wasn't until I took a color course my senior year that I had an "aha" moment. I believe that some people are hard-wired to be more adept at certain things, such as a musician with perfect pitch or the math whiz who can calculate huge equations in his head, but I was not one who had an innate color sense. I continued to study color, and then I began teaching—and wow, that really taught me about color. There's a saying: "Those that can, do; those that can't, teach." I don't believe that for a second, far preferring the idea that to learn something, you study it; to put it into practice, you do it; and to really master it, you teach it. So my color sense is 35 years of accumulated study, and I truly believe that color use and perceptive sensitivity are skills that can be taught.

You've continually innovated the way hand dyeing and the resulting fabric can work together, with "intentional pooling" and other patterning. What's on the horizon from a dyeing perspective?

This spring we launched a dyeing style called Ikat, which was inspired by the sweater I did for the Holiday 2013 issue of *Vogue Knitting*. Trisha Malcolm [*Vogue Knitting's* editorial director] saw one of the designs in my new book *Artful Color, Mindful Knits* and asked for a different but related version, commenting that it would look just like ikat. It did indeed, and I decided that a fresh palette of spring colors combined with off-white was just the ticket. I've had a blast figuring out different approaches and lots of fun collaborating and sharing ideas with Karla Steubing, one of the moderators of the Pooled Knits group on Ravelry.

I ask it of everyone: When and how did you learn to knit?

My mom taught my Brownie troop how to knit

when I was 8. I think I was the only one for whom it stuck, and I've been an avid knitter ever since. I taught myself to crochet from a magazine when I was in my early teens. Mom taught me English style, but I taught myself how to knit Continental after I learned to crochet. Of course, since there wasn't anyone to show me, I did it the lazy way, and to this day I knit and purl with all stitches presenting backwards. Since my knitting is very fast and very even, I'm not motivated to change, and as I tell my students, there is no wrong way to knit as long as your stitches look correct. That's one reason I prefer to teach color and design courses as opposed to tricky technical stuff: It's too hard for me to force my hands to knit in a standard way. My maternal grandmother was born in a small village in Greece, where she spun, dyed, wove and crocheted. When she moved to the U.S. as a young bride, she happily got rid of everything except crochet, which she did by sight until she died at 95. She never did understand why my mom and I both liked weaving.

When did you start designing patterns?

I came to designing through the back door. People loved my yarns but invariably asked what they could do with them. The gauges were pretty standard, so I thought finding patterns wouldn't be a problem, but they really wanted to see yarn-specific designs. So I drew on my years of knitting and dressmaking and went at it from the perspective of what I'd like to wear and how I'd like it to fit. Interestingly, when I began designing it was the waning years of European-style huge shoulders and totally drop-shouldered boxy garments that looked good hanging from dowels but not from people. I was happy to be at the forefront of bringing back fitted knits; a lot of us seemed to be thinking that way at the time. Set-in sleeves and nipped-in waists: I love them. While I do most of the designing for Prism, I have forged some nice relationships over the years with designers including Nancie Wiseman, who does a lot of pieces for me, and Nicky Epstein, who uses a lot of Prism yarn in her books.

What are your favorite kinds of projects to make?

My true favorites involve painting with yarn. Whether it is from patterning a hand-dyed yarn or combining colors as painters do, the pieces that really float my boat have a lot of thrilling color, luscious-feeling yarn and are truly wearable. I try to avoid challenging knitting pieces that are fun to do but never actually go anywhere. Right now I am having a love affair with cowls and scarves in outrageous colors and big, bold shapes.

What's on your needles right now?

I am finishing up a suite of pieces in our new style of dyeing, Ikat. There are several tees, a tunic, a cardigan and a baby blanket. All are fun once you get established; the yarn does the work as long as you pay reasonable attention—no autopilot allowed here! I knit what interests me at the moment. Sometimes I can't wait to finish a project; other times it gets tabled; and occasionally I give up. Not everything works out.

I hear that you and your husband are avid sailors in your hometown of St. Petersburg, Florida. How often are you out on the water? What else do you do in your spare time?

Matt and I met as competitors at a national sailing championship and never looked back. Boating is what drew us from Buffalo to a warm climate, and although we aren't sailing as much, we continue to boat often, now on a trawler-style power boat that doesn't rely on the whims of the weather to get somewhere. Plus, I can knit while we travel; the speeds are comfortable for any on-board activity. We look forward to the day when we return to sailing, but it requires more free time than we now have. We spend a great deal of time outdoors, enjoying our Florida landscape and yacht club activities (Matt is the current Commodore of the St. Petersburg Yacht Club). We are blessed to have three of our parents living in St. Pete, so we spend as much time as possible with them. Between the art, yachting and knitting communities, we are kept very busy.

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