



TANGLED THREADS

Unraveling the knitting trends of the past 10 years.

SPRING CLEANING

Dusty shelves and messy floor space won't sell yarn.

WHO'S GOT THE BUTTON?

Finding the best fasteners for your shop.

MAY 2015



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REMINISCING



In May 2005, *YMN* made its debut in its current form. It had been lying dormant for years, until Art Joinnides, Trisha Malcolm and Karin Strom brought it back. Knitting was experiencing a boom time, with yarn stores popping up across the U.S., and these industry veterans knew that a guiding hand would be needed. In her first Editor's Letter, Karin wrote, "Our aim is to provide the latest information to help everyone keep up with this incredibly fast-moving business." On the magazine's fifth anniversary, in 2010, Daryl Brower wrote a feature article looking back at the previous five years. She noted, "The industry has gone through plenty of ups and downs since the first issue of the reincarnated *YMN* arrived at your LYS five years ago," citing five influences: Social media and the rise of Ravelry; a new kind of knitter (a savvy one); new yarns/new distribution methods (including the Internet and selling direct); the fall of the scarf/novelty-yarn craze; and the recession. Ten years later, I'm here to help those stores that survived the bust to weather the new economic landscape.



on the cover

PAINT YOUR PALETTE

When picking paint or yarn, variety is the name of the game. Blue Sky Alpacas' Skinny Organic Cotton comes in a whole range of gorgeous saturated colors.
www.blueskyalpacas.com

Photograph by Marcus Tullis

In this anniversary issue, we are looking back again. What yarns were born 10 years ago and are still going strong? Some of them may surprise you. (Read all about them on page 20.) We profile a yarn company and a yarn store that each started 10 years ago, too—SweetGeorgia Yarns in Vancouver, British Columbia (page 46), and Simply Socks Yarn Company in Fort Wayne, Indiana (page 44). And Bristol Ivy looks at ongoing trends in pattern sales and how these have changed over the years (page 48). But we're also still giving you tools to help make your business stronger as you move forward. Are you considering bringing in your own branded yarn? Michael del Vecchio outlines a few of the issues you should keep in mind (page 36).

It's May—spring—so it's time to refresh your store. Clear out some old stock, following tips from Heather Gooch on page 42, and clean up the store itself. After all, making your shop inviting to customers is of paramount importance, especially when they might not be gracing your doorstep as often as you'd like. Read what Daryl Brower has to say on the topic on page 52.

On a personal note, I started my own knitting-oriented blog in May 2005, which is still active a decade later. Those were the halcyon days of knitting online—the big names had started their sites a year or so earlier, and I was shoulder to shoulder on the bandwagon of devoted fans. Suddenly a whole new world of knitting and crochet was open to me. I learned new cast-ons, bind-offs and methods of joining—the first time I heard about spit-splicing, my mind was blown. A year after I started the blog, I moved from pop culture publishing to craft publishing, and just a few years after that I took this job. I'm living the dream! To read about others in the yarn industry who are doing the same, read Leslie Petrovski's article on page 56.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erin".

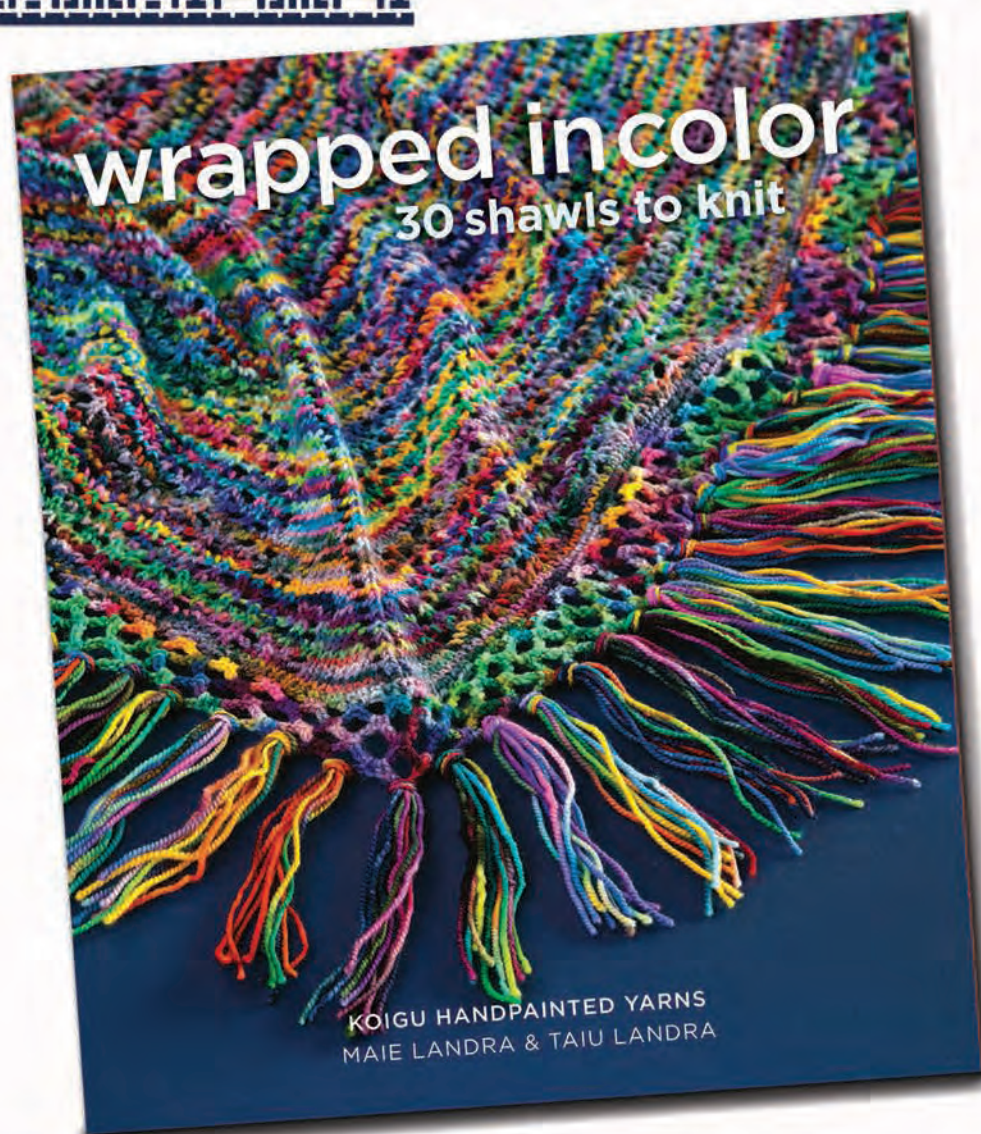
Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



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Vivid colors help "lift your mood and change your spirit," says Felicia Lo of SweetGeorgia Yarns.

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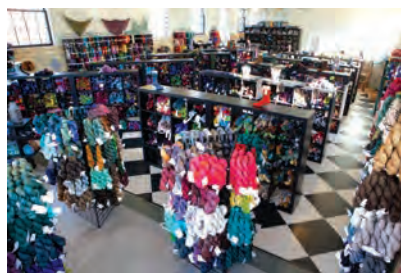
MARCUS TULLIS



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The origin stories of five successful craftpreneurs. By Leslie Petrovski

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Magazine Publishers of America
Manufactured and printed in the United States of America

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REACHING OUT TO RETAIL

▼ If you thought you saw some of your favorite Knit Collage yarns in stores like Anthropologie and Free People over the past few months, you aren't imagining things. The popular retailers sold a line of original accessories designed by Knit Collage, worked up in the yarn company's fashionable handspun yarns.

Knit Collage's Amy Small explains, "I started the accessories side of the business last year. We create all the patterns and yarn, and knit all the accessories in India. We debuted the line at an accessories trade show in New York City in February 2014, and [the stores] placed their orders for our designs at the show, similar to how TNNA works." The trendy shops snapped

up chunky cowls, hats, mittens and shawls knit in Pixie Dust, Sister, Cast Away and other popular Knit Collage yarns. Premade accessories for customers to order are also available on Knit Collage's website, though the designs here tend to be different from those sold to retailers.

"Some of the colors [for the accessories line] were custom shades I designed especially for the accessories going to the stores. For example, most of what Anthropologie ordered was different from what we sell directly to knitters—I try to keep them as different as possible." The accessories line has proved so successful, Small is hoping for a repeat in 2015. www.knitcollage.com

NORAH GAUGHAN GOES TWEED

▼ Brooklyn Tweed welcomed the new year with a presentation of the company's Winter collection—and the major announcement that designer and industry veteran Norah Gaughan was joining the Brooklyn Tweed design team. Says company spokesman Luigi Boccia, "We are thrilled to welcome Norah Gaughan. In her 30 years in the knitting industry, Norah has directed design at several major North American yarn companies and has published thousands of patterns. Her pieces are instantly recognizable, marked by her background in biology and interest in natural patterns as well as her facility with cables and organic shapes." Gaughan, most recently the creative director for Berroco, is the author of several books, including *Knitting Nature*. Gaughan joins Jared Flood, Michele Wang, Julie Hoover and Véronik Avery as the fifth member of the design team. Their next collaboration, slated for the spring, will be a men's-wear collection. www.brooklynntweed.com

STITCHES SWITCHES

XXR, Inc., sponsor of the Stitches knit and crochet expos, recently announced changes to its 2015 lineup. Stitches East, originally scheduled for Hartford, Connecticut, in the fall, has been canceled. XXR CEO Benjamin Levisay states, "We are sad that we have not been able to make this show work well enough to hold a Stitches East in 2015. We appreciate the support of everyone who has attended the show, and we'd like to extend an invitation to join us at our other shows." XXR announced the addition of a new show, Stitches Texas, scheduled for September 17–20 at the Irving Convention Center in Irving. www.knittinguniverse.com



SPINNING STORIES

▼ Author and designer Joanne Seiff has always loved hearing the stories behind the knitwear. Now Seiff has begun a new series designed to create stories that accompany original designs. Intended to feed our love of fiber-y fiction, Seiff's Yarn Spinner series pairs an original knitting pattern with a new short story in handy pdf form. As Seiff explains, "This new series allows me to share two of my favorite things: reading and knitting. I often write short pieces that reference the fiber arts, but I find that traditional knitting publications don't always have print space for an extra essay or short story. The downloadable pdf format gives me the opportunity to share more with knitters, passing along some food for thought to go with a new pattern." Seiff's first installment is a short story called "The Hole Inside," accompanied by a pattern for stranded mittens in a generous range of sizes. Seiff plans on releasing new projects on a quarterly basis and hopes to include non-fiction essays as well as fiction. www.joanneseiff.com

COLLABORATION STATION



▼ It's a novel cure for an abandoned project: Package up that partially finished shawl and send it to a friend. Inspired in part by an old parlor game called "exquisite corpse"—in which a player begins a story, then passes it on to the next person, who adds a sentence, and so on—indie designers Mary-Heather Browne, Olga Buraya-Kefelian, Amy Christoffers, Bristol Ivy, Leila Raabe and Michele Wang applied the concept to shawl knitting.

Ivy explains, "Using yarns [from the shop] *A Verb for Keeping Warm*, we each started a shawl with 20 rows of our own devising. We then passed the shawl along to the next designer, who built onto it with her own 20 rows, interpreting our start of the design in her own way. The shawls traveled around the country for about 10 months—life happens, and there were some delays—with each designer getting to work on each shawl." To keep things fresh, no designer preceded or followed the same person twice. When all six designers had contributed their 20 rows, the shawl was returned to the knitter who started it so that she could finish it off, tying the project together with, say, a final border. The results? "I couldn't have imagined how my own shawl turned out, but I don't think I could love it more," says Ivy. Patterns were written up, charted and are available as the *54 Rue de Chateau Collection*, available through Ravelry.

PLAYING WITH STRING

▼ Both **String** and **Stacy Charles** are known for their dedication to fashion. So when the venerable Manhattan yarn shop was in need of a new owner, it's not surprising that Charles, co-owner of the yarn company **Tahki•Stacy Charles**, offered to step up to the plate. "String was very successful under its previous owner, Linda Morse," he explains. "We decided that we could keep the legacy of String and see it continue as a vibrant part of the New York knitting scene." The official change in ownership, which took place earlier this year, coincided with the shop's move to a new location on the Upper East Side. Charles emphasizes that String and

Tahki•Stacy Charles will be run as completely separate businesses. "String will not sell only TSC yarns," Charles notes. "TSC will be one of many suppliers, and String will remain String." Most of the existing staff stayed on, which means that designer Lidia Karabinech will remain in charge of in-house design and Lisa Hoffman in charge of education. Cynthia Crescenzo is director of operations. "Existing customers love the new space, and we've brought in new customers too," Charles remarks. "We want to continue providing the beautiful cashmere yarns and other luxury items String is known for while growing the brand." www.string.com

IN THE MAKING

▼ The **Wilson Collective**, a gallery space and makers' studio located in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, is a dream come true for its founders—and a nurturing, creative place for local artisans. Longtime friends **Gary Wilson** and **Rhonda Fagnoli** merged their talents and passions (Wilson has been in the custom framing business for more than three decades; Fagnoli has been in education for 25 years) in the collective, a beautiful setting featuring a unique blend of fine art and textile art. Visitors can view artwork from all over the world, including local artists from the Rhode Island and Massachusetts areas, but the space also houses a yarn studio and dye kitchen. Fagnoli hand-dyes the yarn that fills the shelves in the studio, and she teaches classes (along with several Rhode Island School of Design graduates) for children and adults that range from knitting to printmaking to shibori. The studio brings in nationally known teachers for master classes (Tanis Gray and Cirilia Rose have taught in recent months) along with knitting-related authors, Ann Hood among them. The gallery also hosts events to benefit local charities. www.thewilsoncollective.com

CYC GOES JUMBO

▼ The Craft Yarn Council's **Standard Yarn Chart** is designed to help crafters understand the weight of yarn they're working with by organizing yarns into categories, each of which is assigned a standard name and number, with Category 0 including the finest yarns (lace weight and crochet thread, for example) through Category 6, for bulkies. The chart also includes typical needle and hook sizes and typical gauge ranges for each category. In January, the Craft Yarn Council announced a modification to the chart. "Over the past year, a variety of super-thick yarns have been introduced to the marketplace. These yarns, many of which are used for arm knitting, do not fit the current gauge guidelines in the Council's Standard Yarn Weight System," explains **Mary Colucci**, executive director of the CYC. After consulting with manufacturers and other industry professionals, the CYC decided to add an additional category called "Jumbo" to the Yarn Weight System. Category 7 will become the heaviest category on the chart; a few minor adjustments to the adjoining category are being made so the chart is consistent. The goal of the change, notes Colucci, is to "make it easier for crocheters and knitters to understand the type of fabric these Jumbo yarns create and the range of hooks and needles generally required." The CYC website was revised to reflect this change in February; expect to see the revised category transition into use by publishers and yarn companies over the course of the year. Download the revised chart at craftyarncouncil.com/weight.html.



YARN PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

In honor of the tenth anniversary of YMN's reboot, we asked yarn-industry professionals to reflect on the past decade, comment on today's market and make predictions for the next 10 years. Their answers include fascinating insights about the industry.

PAST

"The foodie and yarnie worlds continue to evolve in parallel. Just the other day I heard someone use the term "varietal" to describe wool from a particular sheep breed. I've always encouraged such comparisons because they really highlight the sensual nuance that exists within the yarn realm. But lately I've started to worry that our yarn system will follow the foodie world too far, that our yarn shops will be glutted with the yarn equivalent of a dozen kinds of overpriced kale. The value must always be there. The yarns must exist for a reason beyond profit. Everyone needs a chance to taste the kale and decide for himself if he likes it, if it's a worthwhile investment personally. But here's where the food and yarn metaphors completely diverge: Unlike that \$14 chocolate bar from Venezuela or the \$60 bottle of wine that's gone in an evening, yarn is yarn forever. The value never goes away, it just changes form."

—Clara Parkes, author and Knitter's Review founder and editor

"It's been fascinating over the past few years to watch our industry evolve, similar to the beer industry, from larger brands and methods of distribution to smaller microbrews."

—Laura Zander, owner, Jimmy Bean's Wool, Reno, Nevada

"We've seen the realization of the 'true knitter': someone who always wants to enjoy the feel of yarn no matter how much stash she has, how many emails she has to read or how many distractions are thrown at her."

—Barry Klein, Trendsetter Yarns/Lotus Yarns

"We've gone from a face-to-face society to one that lives at least part of its life online, and we're seeing both benefits and downfalls as a result. I think that the sharing of knowledge is the most miraculous result of us all being wired together. It's allowed for innovations in knitting that I don't think any of us could have imagined. A constant flow of inspiration and ideas is addictive. We keep wanting more, and so there's a huge amount of pressure on content creators to provide the new. What continues to amaze me is that new ideas, techniques and approaches do keep coming."

—Amy Singer, knitty.com

"The biggest change is that the industry has gone from being distributor-driven to consumer-driven. The market now has to respond [directly] to consumer demands."

—Cornelia Tuttle Hamilton, designer and author

"One thing I love that's happened in the past 10 years in yarn production is the deep exploration of fiber blends. Just like American winemakers did in the '80s, when they moved past varietals and entered the world of blended wines, yarn manufacturers are giving us every conceivable blend of fibers. It's wonderful to see how the strengths of one fiber can marry with the strengths of another."

—Patty Lyons, designer and teacher

"One change that's occurred over the past 10 years is that bloggers have lost a lot of influence, except for a small core group. There's been a shift to consumer influences (via Ravelry) and podcasters/videocasters."

—Jocelyn Grayson, Knitventures

"The yarn industry has changed incredibly in the past 10 years. In 2005, wholesalers and retailers alike were still smarting from the demise of scarf yarns. We were all shell-shocked and over-inventoried. We then hit the financial crisis and that dramatically shifted customer buying habits. I think we are all still waiting for that next big trend; there have been a few mini-trends, but nothing that has really gained traction."

—Kathy Elkins, owner, Webs, Northampton, Massachusetts

PRESENT

"Knitters used to start with a pattern and buy yarn with the pattern in mind. Now people start by buying yarn and know that they'll be able to find a pattern to go with it. With increasing stash, sellers have sought to create a sense of artificial urgency to encourage people to buy more yarn. By creating exclusive colorways and yarns available for a limited time only, the consumer is enticed to buy it today before it becomes unavailable. That means knitters want an item that they can't get elsewhere."

—Jocelyn Grayson, Knitventures

"Watching the ebbs and flows of the past 10 years has been really exciting. So many new fiber fanatics have been created, and while we may not be seeing the boom we saw several years ago, it seems to me that the growth of the online fiber community has so sustained us—and created a real community—that we are in good shape for the next 10 years. The challenge will be for yarn retailers to figure out how to embrace and incorporate changes."

—Edie Eckman, designer, teacher, author

"I see customers taking a greater interest in small businesses as a whole, favoring hand-dyed yarns and independently published patterns. I get the feeling that maybe knitters in general are starting to see the value in paying for good quality patterns and yarn. Or maybe that's just wishful thinking."

—Kate Gilbert, Twist Collective

"The yarn world has taken on a degree of social curation we didn't yet have a decade ago. Back then it was still up to the LYS to pinpoint quality and value. Magazines were also big influencers, as were a few key knitting blogs. But today we have Pinterest and Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Etsy, Crafts, Snapchat and blogs, and who knows what other systems are being devised as we speak."

—Clara Parkes, Knitter's Review

"Cooperative Press couldn't have grown to [its current size] without digital and, more specifically, without Ravelry. Having a targeted, niche audience of knitters sitting in front of their computers—ready to click through on our Ravelry ads and purchase immediately from us—has made all the difference. Given that so many shops have stopped carrying books altogether, this signaled a shift both in shops' inventory choices and in larger realities about the publishing industry. It's tough to balance on the edge of two industries that are changing so quickly, but I have faith they'll both be stronger in the long run."

—Shannon Okey, *Cooperative Press*

"The growth of the Internet has exponentially changed people's expectations for a real-world shopping experience. The availability of free patterns has made it harder for yarn shops to sell patterns with yarn. The availability of discounted yarns online makes shoppers reluctant to pay full price. Yet yarn shops are still the first place knitters and crocheters turn to for help and advice. Figuring out how to balance those competing factors is the challenge all yarn shops face."

—Robyn M. Schrager, *Kirkwood Knittery, Kirkwood, Missouri*

"Our yarn world has become an innovative place over the past 10 years. Knitting isn't about quick and easy and just taking what is offered as far as patterns and yarn are concerned, like it was in the early 2000s. Knitters today are skilled and savvy. They know what patterns they want to knit based on designers whose work they admire. They know what yarn they want to knit with based on knowledge of fiber, sheep breed, ply and twist. They spend time learning new methods and techniques. Knitters today aren't just knitting; they are spinning their own yarn and weaving with it too. This is a most creative time to be a knitter."

—Jillian Moreno, *knitty.com*

"While trends have come and gone over the past 10 years, the biggest [change I've seen] is how we interact with each other as a community. At the beginning of the decade, during the pre-recession boom, the knitting world was all about reaching out and making connections. When the recession hit, we drew back a bit, working more toward building insular communities based on local interests and production. Knitters were not immune to the general world trend of turning toward home during this time; we thought more consciously about what and how we consume and our place in our local community. Now that the recession has ended and the economy is recovering, we've found a middle ground between these two extremes. We are conscious of the community on both a local and a global level and are working to establish our own niches and interests within it. The knitting community is enormous—more than five million on Ravelry, and countless others besides—and so perhaps now is the time to develop our own intentional sub-communities based on shared interests."

—Bristol Ivy, *independent designer*

"To me, the past 10 years in the yarn world have been some of the most exciting I have witnessed in my 46 years of yarn-world experience. The rise of indie dyers has meant limitless new possibilities for color and base options, providing a strong influence on traditional yarn companies and end users alike. The development and use of social media means we are sharing ideas and patterns, and our love of our craft, in entirely new and innovative ways, allowing us to form a sense of community like never before. The proliferation of ways for designers to share their work beyond traditional publishing means there are endless and thrilling possibilities for everyone to participate in this new incarnation of the yarn world, both as designers and end users."

—Caroline Sommerfeld, *Ancient Arts Fibre Crafts*

FUTURE

"We will have a new group of beautiful young people, both men and women, who will create and share new ideas. We will see the coming together of both wholesale and retail with a revived energy as we finally realize that we need each other and that together we will survive. We are the sum of the parts, and without the whole, we are simply loose pieces devoid of any meaning. Yarn will continue to change in both style and shape and fiber and price. A renaissance will happen with the help of the old and the new coming together."

—Barry Klein, *Trendsetter Yarns/Lotus Yarns*

"I'm hopeful about the future, because my 9-year-old and her friends are very interested and excited to learn to knit. I'm excited to see how a new generation of knitters will shape the future of the industry."

—Kate Gilbert, *Twist Collective*

"Research is scientifically backing up the need for our craft, both socially and physically, so despite any future recessions, I expect the yarn world will continue to grow and expand its influence. Creativity and social media will continue to be a big part of this new yarn world. Quality and innovation, mindfulness and responsible choices are all going to take us in new (and old) directions."

—Caroline Sommerfeld, *Ancient Arts Fibre Crafts*

"I think it would be madness to try to predict what changes are coming in the next 10 years, but I guarantee that whatever we're doing now will change. I'm most curious about how all forms of media—already in significant flux over the past decade—will reinvent themselves. I'm loving the resurgence of love for pen on paper right now. As a society, we're clearly not ready to abandon our traditions entirely, just because shinier buttons have become available to push."

—Amy Singer, *knitty.com*

"Where will we be in 10 years? I hope we'll be wiser, more discerning—and that we never lose our passion and curiosity. With those qualities intact, nothing but good can come to the knitting world."

—Clara Parkes, *Knitter's Review*

FLIPPING OUT

▼ After nearly 200 years of creating fine knitting needles and crochet hooks, you'd think the **Addi** company had done it all. But **Chuck Wilmesher**, director of new product and development for **Skacel Collection**, had his own ideas. "I love double-pointed needles," says Wilmesher, "especially for socks, and when I started at Skacel four years ago, one of the first things I did was to ask Mr. Selter [Thomas Selter, president and owner of the Addi company] to produce a new dpn for the Addi line." Last year, Selter sent Wilmesher a prototype needle made from lightweight aluminum. "I liked the feel of the aluminum, but the point was a little too blunt for the yarn I was knitting with," explains Wilmesher. "So I wrote back and suggested that Addi make one end with the blunt tip, but put a sharper tip on the other end. And voilà! FlipStix were born." FlipStix are constructed of high-grade aluminum; feature needles in different colors, to help keep stitches organized; and add versatility with a supersharp Addi Lace tip at one end and a blunter Turbo tip at the other. FlipStix are available in 6- and 8-inch lengths, in sizes ranging from U.S. sizes 0–11. www.skacelknitting.com



BEST-DRESSED WOOL

▼ There's a new wool wash in town—a product that takes its inspiration from the 18th-century process of "wool dressing." A wool dresser had a tough and grueling job: to wash sheep before shearing (usually in a river or large tub) and then to prepare the spinning frame, the machinery used for production, all the while maintaining quality control. **Wetherbie Wool Dressing**, created by **Nuna Knits**, was specially designed for luxury knitted woolens and removes stains and odors. Nuna Knits' **Peggie Ehlers** explains: "The product has been

three years in the making. We worked with a master chemist named Bill Coulter, whom I chose for his professional experience formulating detergents. I wanted a wool wash specifically formulated for luxury fibers like cashmere, alpaca, vicuna, qiviut and Saxon merino." Ehlers shipped boxes of raw fleece to Coulter for a comprehensive testing process, evaluating fiber qualities like fineness, lanolin content and washability, and testing how various ingredients affected the quality of each. Ehlers then personally tested Wetherbie on an extensive selection of raw fleeces, including

luxury, medium and coarse wools; knits (including vintage cashmere); and woven wool items. Says Ehlers, "I love how our formula opens the cuticles of these fibers and truly cleans and restores luster and shine while keeping the integrity of the fibers and not stripping their qualities." Wetherbie Wool Dressing is biodegradable, nontoxic, has a neutral pH and is non-felting; it's available in 4-, 8- and 16-ounce bottles, as well as a 1-oz/24-piece POS display. **Buttons Etc.** is the exclusive distributor for Wetherbie Wool Wash. www.nunaknits.com; www.buttonsetc.com

THE CHOSEN ONE

▼ Congratulations to **Red Heart**, winner of a 2015 **Women's Choice Award Seal**. Red Heart was honored as America's most recommended yarn brand, based on a national survey of thousands of women across the United States. The Women's Choice Awards seek to raise consumer awareness regarding brands that are trusted and recommended by women. Says Delia Passi, CEO and founder, "By carrying the Women's Choice Award Seal, brands like Red Heart signify their commitment to empower women to make smart buying choices." Red Heart has been a leading brand in the yarn market for more than 75 years. "Receiving the Women's Choice Award Seal is testimony to Red Heart's commitment to delighting knitters and crocheters with great yarns and pattern inspiration, all crafted with love," says **Alyson Bell**, vice president of marketing. "When consumers choose our products and recommend Red Heart over other brands, it is the highest accolade we could be given." www.redheart.com



ANNIE'S GETS IN THE ONLINE GAME

Fort Wayne, Indiana-based publisher **Annie's** announces its newly revamped website, "Annie's Yarn Shop," designed to offer users a more streamlined shopping experience and provide additional content. New features include reorganized categories of yarns, patterns and accessories to make shopping easier; Annie's Trend Reports, highlighting hot trends in yarn as well as specific products and projects; and Stitch Guide videos demonstrating

various techniques. The brand-new Build-a-Kit feature allows customers to browse patterns, then select size, yarn-color choices, even needles and accessories. They can then purchase an individualized kit that includes everything they need to knit the selected project. "We are excited to offer our customers all of these new upgrades and enhancements," says Kortney Barile, Annie's yarn buyer. Check out the features at www.anniesyarnshop.com.

CRAFTING A COLORFUL LIFE WITH KRISTIN NICHOLAS



YMN: Your new book, *Crafting a Colorful Home*, features projects that include knitting, quilting, crochet, embroidery and painting. What made you decide to mix crafts within the same book?

KN: The book came about because of a feature article on my brightly decorated farmhouse on the interior decorating/architecture website Houzz.com. The article went crazy with comments, both good and bad. I told my literary agent about it, and she thought the story of our farmhouse might make a good book. I have always done lots and lots of different arts and crafts, so it was only natural to include all kinds of

Kristin Nicholas has a lot going on: She's a knitwear designer, author (of both knitting and embroidery books), teacher (in person and via the websites CreativeBug and Craftsyl), TV personality (on PBS crafting shows), painter, blogger and interior designer. She also runs a sheep farm called Leyden Glen Farm, located in northwestern Massachusetts. Nicholas's historic farmhouse is the focal point of her latest book, *Crafting a Colorful Home* (Roost Books), which takes an insider's look at her color-drenched home, giving readers tips for using color to create their own personal style. *YMN* spoke with Nicholas recently about her latest book and her work.

techniques. I have used them in the decoration of our home for the past 15 years.

YMN: Would a reader need any specialized knowledge to complete the projects?

KN: Most of the projects are pretty basic and friendly for beginners. The only ones that use special skills are the knit and crochet projects.

YMN: Did you get any resistance to the idea of mixing different kinds of crafts in a single book?

KN: No—it is what they wanted. So many more people are doing DIY projects and crafts now than they did 10 years ago. I think including different techniques in one book actually speaks to the current DIY trend.

YMN: Did it feel a little weird opening up your house to the public?

KN: Ever since I went away to college, I have been into decorating the space where I live. My favorite magazines are shelter mags. I view our house as a giant art project—using color, pieces of furniture, paint, textiles and handmade objects as part of a large picture. When I arrange things, I think about how everything would look in a photo, so no, it wasn't weird at all. Our farmhouse was actually featured in the *Boston Globe* and *Country Home* magazine more than a decade ago. I also have used the house as a location and backdrop for many of my books, so my family is used to photographers and stylists working in our home.

YMN: Do you have a favorite among the many things you do so beautifully?

KN: I really love to do everything. I find that in the winter, I am more interested in knitting, and in the warmer months, I am all about the embroidery. It's impossible to pick a favorite art or craft because they all fulfill different parts of my creative self.

YMN: Tell me about the little black-and-white kitten on the cover of the book.

KN: Isn't she the cutest? We live on a sheep farm and have a litter or two of kittens every year. This little kitten was so photogenic and was happy to just sit still. The weekend after the photo shoot, she left us to go live with her forever family.



CLASSY KNITS

▼ Customers are always eager for interesting new classes, especially classes devoted to a specific project. Now the company **Stitch Sprouts** is making it easier for yarn shop owners to provide pattern-based classes with new Class Kits. Introduced at January's TNNA show, each kit includes a skein of yarn, a pattern and a handout that walks knitters through the project. The handout, which breaks the project down into individual steps, can be used as the basis for a class or by motivated self-starters who want to work through the project on their own. Says Stitch Sprouts' **Heather Zoppetti**, "Classes attract customers.

But what shop owner has the time to create detailed class materials when she's busy running a store? We plan to grow our selection of classes with new techniques and patterns." At press time, Stitch Sprouts was offering two kits—a shawl and a cabled cowl—each knit in Stitch Sprouts' sport-weight yarn Yellowstone. Zoppetti, who designed the patterns used in the premier kits, hopes to introduce new kits three times a year, eventually adding crochet to the mix. Learn more at www.stitchsprouts.com.

IN MEMORIAM

Harlan Brown (1925–2014)

▼ The industry lost a stalwart champion of wool last December when Brown Sheep Company founder Harlan Brown died at the age of 89. Described by his daughter Peggy Jo Wells as "an amazing man with a true entrepreneur's spirit," Brown began his career on the family farm in Nebraska, raising sheep and harvesting wool. After Wells took up spinning in the late 1970s, her father realized there was a business opportunity sitting on the backs of his sheep: Instead of sending the wool out to be processed and spun, he could open his own mill. He found machinery and parts from abandoned mills and set up shop. After creating yarn he was satisfied with, he filled his trunk with it and went looking for buyers. It took a while to convince people that fine yarn could be milled in the U.S., but Brown was confident—and he was right. His company, Brown Sheep, sells yarn across the United States and internationally. The company now employs 30 people and is run by the second and third generations of his family. Brown was thrilled when designer Ralph Lauren chose Brown Sheep as one of the American companies to supply materials for 2014 Winter Olympic team clothing. "It takes a special passion to make a business like this work," Wells says. "Dad left his mark on everything out here. He was a really neat guy."

DESIGNERS IN DEPTH

▼ Pairing a designer with the perfect yarn can lead to magnificent results—and benefit both yarn company and designer with a bump in sales. Two industry leaders recently began working directly with indie designers in creative new programs. The Northampton, Massachusetts, shop **Webs** announced the debut of its **Designer-in-Residence** program. Each year, Webs will select one knitwear designer and one crochet designer to work with its **Valley Yarns** line; this year's selections are **Fiona Ellis** and **Doris Chan**, respectively. Ellis and Chan will produce six original designs over the course of the year, with a new design premiering each month (knitting in odd-numbered months, crochet in even). Each new design will be accompanied by a blog post by the designer, discussing inspiration and giving tips for success.

Ellis's first project, the "I Feel Vine" cardigan (below, right), was released in January; Chan's shawl-collared stole (below, left) premiered in February. **Kathy Elkins**, owner/vice-president of marketing, explains, "After the success we had working with independent designers during our 40th-anniversary celebration last year, we wanted to continue those types of relationships. It was important to me to create



a program that not only showcases Valley Yarns, but shines a spotlight on the designers. I want our customers to really get to know them. Fiona and Doris have always been tremendous supporters of our efforts with Valley Yarns; that, coupled with their incredible talent, made them obvious choices." Watch for new designs each month at www.yarn.com.

Classic Elite Yarns' new **Viewpoints** program gives selected designers the opportunity to create their own pattern booklets using their favorite CEY yarns. As the CEY blog describes it, "[The program] represents an open collaboration between the indie designer and the experience and resources at CEY. No restrictions, no seasonal deadlines. Just the designer's imagination brought to life and sent out into the knitting world." Designers pick their own theme and build a discrete collection around it. The first two Viewpoints collections, published in January, present strikingly different design sensibilities. **Talitha Kuomi**, a designer featured in Skacel Collection's knitting competition "The Fiber Factor," created a music-themed collection called "Artistic Differences." Kuomi drew on her experience as part of a blues band to produce a collection in which each garment is presented two ways—one adopting an edgier, rock-n-roll style (above, left), the other taking a more bohemian approach. **Julia Farwell-Clay** found inspiration in children's book writer and textile artist Virginia Lee Burton, looking to Burton's work as part of a design guild that created block-printed fabrics. "From Folly Cove" translates motifs into stranded and textural patterns to adorn sweaters, shawls and other women's garments (above, right). Read more about the Viewpoints program on the CEY blog: blog.classicelityarns.com/2014/12/a-new-way-of-thinking.html.

EUCALAN TURNS 25

▼ Knitters and others who care about their clothing have been enjoying the benefits of no-rinse **Eucalan** delicate wash for a quarter century. Today's knitters and crocheters are accustomed to alternative laundry products, but in 1990, when Eucalan first entered the North American market, there were few options for delicate laundry care. Like many pioneering products, the story behind Eucalan features a bit of serendipity—the foresight of someone who knew a good product when she saw it. Company founder **Mary Ellen Edgar** was visiting a friend in Australia when she tried a home remedy recommended for washing woolen items. It was no-rinse, saving time, money and water; it featured natural ingredients with inherent moth-detering qualities (indeed, its name is derived from "eucalyptus" and "lanolin," two of the major ingredients in the product); and it left her hand knits looking beautiful. After using and testing the product

back in her native Canada, Edgar initially found success marketing the product to local yarn shops. Attending trade shows led to more orders. As the company grew, a one-woman business grew into a family business. Today Mary Ellen Edgar serves as president of Eucalan, describing her role as that of "an adviser, ambassador and scout." Her daughter-in-law **Jennifer Edgar** was recently named chief executive officer and now helms day-to-day operations. To celebrate its silver anniversary, the company launched a revamped website and has created a sleek POP display as part of its brand refresh for retailers. Eucalan is also celebrating with a 12-day "Berlin to Paris" knitting tour, traveling with knitters through the capitals of Germany and France. Offered in conjunction with Pauwels Travel, the tour welcomes designer **Kristin Omdahl** and will focus on the crafts, culture and cuisine of the host countries. www.eucalan.com

May 2–3
Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, Maryland
sheepandwool.org

May 9–10
New Hampshire Sheep & Wool Festival
Deerfield Fairground
Deerfield, New Hampshire
nhswga.com

May 14–17
Men's Spring Knitting Retreat
Easton Mountain Retreat Center
Greenwich, New York
mensknittingretreat.com

May 15–17
Shepherd's Harvest Sheep and Wool Festival
Washington County Fairgrounds
Lake Elmo, Minnesota
shepherdsharvestfestival.org

May 15–17
Snake River Fiber Fest
Eastern Idaho Technical College
Idaho Falls, Idaho
srfiberartists.org

May 16
Rhode Island Wool and Fiber Festival
Coggeshall Farm
Bristol, Rhode Island
coggeshallfarm.org

May 16–17
Kentucky Sheep and Fiber Festival
Masterton Station Park
Lexington, Kentucky
kentuckysheepandfiber.com

May 16–17
Long Island Fleece & Fiber Fair
Hallockville Museum Farm
Riverhead, New York
hallockville.com/fleece-and-fiber-fair

May 22–23
Middle Tennessee Fiber Festival
Dickson County Fairgrounds
Dickson, Tennessee
tnfiberfestival.com

May 23–24
Great Lakes Fiber Show
Wayne County Fairgrounds
Wooster, Ohio
greatlakesfibershow.com

May 23–24
Massachusetts Sheep & Woolcraft Fair
Cumington Fairgrounds
Cumington, Massachusetts
masheepwool.org

May 30–31
Flag Wool & Fiber
Pioneer Museum
Flagstaff, Arizona
flagwool.com

May 30–June 1
TNNA Summer Trade Show
Greater Columbus Convention Center
Columbus, Ohio
tnna.org

June 3–7
Squam Spring Retreat
Rockywood-Deephaven Camps
Holderness, New Hampshire
squamartworkshops.com

June 6–7
Maine Fiber Frolic
Windsor Fairgrounds
Windsor, Maine
fiberfrolic.com

June 13–14
Estes Park Wool Market
Fairgrounds at Stanley Park
Estes Park, Colorado
visitestespark.com/events-calendar/special-events/wool-market

June 13–14
Iowa Sheep & Wool Festival
Jasper County Fairgrounds
Colfax, Iowa
iowasheepandwoolfestival.com

June 13–14
Mid-Ohio Fiber Fair
Bryn Du Mansion Field House
Granville, Ohio
midohiofiberfair.com

June 19–21
Black Sheep Fiber Gathering
Lane County Fairgrounds
Eugene, Oregon
blacksheepgathering.org

June 19–22
Alice Springs Beanie Festival
Araluen Arts Centre
Witchetty's, Alice Springs, Australia
beaniefest.org

June 26–27
Woolfest
Mitchell's Lakeland
Livestock Centre
Cockermouth, Cumbria, England
www.woolfest.co.uk

July 17–19
Australian Sheep & Wool Show
Prince of Wales Showgrounds
Bendigo, Victoria, Australia
sheepshow.com

July 22–25
The Knit & Crochet Show
Town and Country Resort and Convention Center
San Diego, California
knitandcrochetshow.com

July 25–26
Fibre-East 2014
Redborne Community College
Amphill, Bedfordshire, England
fibre-east.co.uk

July 26–August 1
New England Fiber Arts Retreat
Medomak Retreat Center
Washington, Maine
medomakretreatcenter.com/newenglandfiberartsretreat.php

August 6–9
Stitches Midwest
Schaumburg Renaissance & Convention Center
Schaumburg, Illinois
knittinguniverse.com/midwest

August 12–15
Michigan Fiber Festival
Allegan County Fairgrounds
Allegan, Michigan
michiganfiberfestival.info

August 21–22
Great Basin Fiber Arts Fair
Salt Lake County Equestrian Park
South Jordan, Utah
greatbasinfiberartsfair.org

September 2–7
Monterey County Fair
Monterey County Fairgrounds
Monterey, California
montereycountyfair.com

September 9–13
Fiber College of Maine
Searsport Shores Ocean Camping
Searsport, Maine
fibercollege.org

September 10–12
Georgia FiberFest
Columbus Convention & Trade Center
Columbus, Georgia
gafiberfest.com

September 11–13
Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival
Jefferson Fair Park
Jefferson, Wisconsin
wisconsinssheepandwoolfestival.com

September 12–13
Garden State Fiber Festival
Hunterdon County Fairgrounds
Lambertville, New Jersey
njsheep.org

September 12–13
Pennsylvania Endless Mountains Fiber Festival
Harford Fairgrounds
Harford, Pennsylvania
pafiberfestival.com

September 17–19
Arkansas Fiber Fest
Hot Springs Convention Center
Hot Springs, Arkansas
arfiberfest.com

September 17–20
Stitches Texas
Irving Convention Center
Irving, Texas
knittinguniverse.com/texas

▼ Knit Wear Love

By Amy Herzog
STC Craft/Melanie Falick; \$24.95
ISBN: 978-1617691393

Amy Herzog's *Fit to Flatter* was wildly popular with frustrated sweater knitters who simply wanted to make a garment that fit. Her

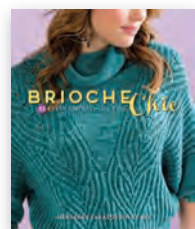


follow-up book is sure to build the skills of those knitters even more. By focusing on style, Herzog helps

needlecrafters define their personal look (modern? sporty? romantic?), then select and adapt patterns to suit that sensibility. It can be hard to self-assess, so readers get lots of concrete help (from a style questionnaire and a chapter deconstructing sweaters) determining how they fit into style categories. The meat of the book, though, is the eight "meta-patterns," blueprints you can use to create a sweater that fits you and your style. Each pattern is written for three different weights of yarn; is sized for bust circumferences ranging from 30 to 54 inches; and is shown in three style variations that illustrate how color, stitch pattern and other details can alter a garment's personality. Photographing models who aren't uniformly stick-thin is a brilliant move, adding to the accessibility and love-what-you-wear vibe that infuses the book.

▼ Brioche Chic

By Mercedes Tarasovich-Clark
Interweave/F+W; \$26.99
ISBN: 978-1620334423



If you haven't tried brioche stitch yet, this stylish collection of patterns is sure to tempt. Projects—22 in all—include

sweaters, scarves and hats for men and women, along with shawls, mittens and cowls. The book is sensibly divided into three sections: First are brioche basics, including cast-ons

and bind-offs, tips on reading brioche charts and shaping how-tos. Once you've got the basics down, explore cabled brioche projects in the second section and multicolor brioche in the third. Larger projects tend to use brioche panels and inserts combined with stockinette or garter stitch to make projects more manageable.

▼ Vest Bets

Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95
ISBN: 978-1936096817

If the idea of a knitted vest has you feeling less than inspired, put away



outworn visions of a three-piece suit or puffy down outerwear. Instead, feast your eyes on

modern iterations of this handy layering piece from designers including Deborah Newton, Fiona Ellis and Yoko Hatta. Without sleeves to worry about, vests take less time to knit, which means you'll be able to whip up a snappy cabled number, opt for Fair Isle patterning, play with mosaic stitches or revel in Mondrian-inspired colorblocking in no time flat. All the garments are knit in Cascade Yarns' 220 Superswash Aran wool, and difficulty levels run the gamut. A variety of silhouettes, lengths and techniques makes this a value-added collection, the first in the publisher's new Modern Knit Mix series.

▼ Knit Together

By Angela Dominguez
Dial Books; \$16.99
ISBN: 978-0803740990

▼ Edmund Unravels

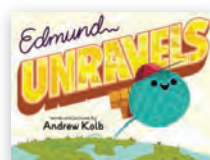
By Andrew Kolb
Nancy Paulsen Books; \$16.99
ISBN: 978-0399169144

Two heartwarming picture books



with yarn as the focus are perfect for sharing with children or grandchildren and would make a sweet

shower gift for a knitter who's expecting. In *Knit Together*, Angela



Dominquez tells the story of a spunky little girl who loves

to draw, and her mother, who loves to knit. The girl discovers that knitting is harder than it looks, even with a patient teacher, but then her mom has a brilliant idea: They'll collaborate. Inspired by Dominguez's own childhood, this sweet story is perfectly captured in simple but love-filled drawings of mother and daughter.

Edmund Unravels, by debut author and illustrator Andrew Kolb, tells the story of Edmund, an adventurous ball of yarn who wants to explore the wide world. Edmund bounces along, encountering new places and new faces, until he realizes something's missing. Kolb ably blends a young child's fascination with discovery with the need to stay grounded with family and friends, using bold retro-modern illustrations and delightfully understated text.

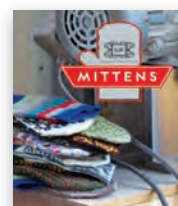
▼ Spillyjane Knits Mittens

By Spillyjane
Cooperative Press; \$26.95
ISBN: 978-1937513689

▼ Aurora Borealis Mittens

By Shannon Okey
Cooperative Press; \$26.95
ISBN: 978-1937513528

Mittens have a lot to recommend them: They don't take much yarn,



they are portable projects, and they provide a canvas for all sorts of creative stitchwork. These books represent

two approaches to colorwork mittens, each well worth a look.

The Canadian designer known as Spillyjane has a rabid online following based in large part on her creative, clever and often intricate mitten designs. She's bound to win new fans and charm existing ones with her first book, which features thirteen mitten designs, along with tips and tricks for optimal results. Some of Spillyjane's most popular designs are included—her charming Cupcake mittens, for

example—but most of the designs are new. Adorable penguins march across one pair, stylized wheat stalks adorn another.

When you've had your fill of representational designs, turn to the Nordic-inspired style of Shannon



Okey's *Aurora Borealis Mittens*. This lovely collection highlights the beauty of handpainted yarns for

stranded knitting, focusing on Icelandic motifs, Nordic stars, geometric repeats and other traditional motifs, tweaked and combined in interesting ways. All of the patterns use two colors of yarn, including popular gradient yarns; swapping main and contrast colors in each mitten is a fun touch, allowing knitters to get a fuller sense for how color and pattern interact.

▼ 50 Garter Stitch Gifts to Knit: The Ultimate Easy-to-Knit Collection

Sixth&Spring Books; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1936096886

Humble garter stitch—often the first stitch a knitter learns—is taken



to new heights in this pattern-packed volume, produced in cooperation with Uni-

versal Yarn. Instead of treating garter as stockinette's ugly stepsister, a talented cadre of designers find new ways to showcase its nubbly ridges. Short rows, intarsia, mosaic stitches, dropped stitches, felting and garter-based lace are just a few of the creative approaches used. Projects are mainly accessories and other small items (cowls, hats, gloves, baby sweaters, shawls), but a handful of larger designs are also presented, including baby blankets, throws and a charming colorwork cardigan. All of the patterns are knit with worsted-weight yarn—Universal's Deluxe Worsted—in a rainbow of colors.

▼ Oodles of Crochet

By Eva Wincent and Paula Hammerskog

Trafalgar Square Books; \$24.95
ISBN: 978-1570766855

As the title promises, there certainly are oodles of crochet in this brightly colored hardcover. Designed to be a one-volume reference for crocheters, the book highlights both technical instruction and a wide assortment of patterns. Novices will appreciate the thorough basics section, with its clear photographs of stitches, tips on gauge, terminology and pattern reading, and primer on yarn and tools. One chapter functions as a stitch dictionary, walking newbies through single, double and other basic stitches, then fans, shells, bobbles and other stitch variations. Garment design, embellishment, troubleshooting and finishing all get a chapter, completing the book's broad overview. Practice newfound skills on 40-some projects spanning difficulty levels; this is a book that crocheters can learn and grow with.

▼ Knit Stitch Dictionary

By Debbie Tomkies

Interweave/F+W; \$22.99
ISBN: 978-1620338841

All hail the hardworking designers who compile stitch dictionaries, collecting, organizing and photographing



stitch patterns so that everyday crafters and professional designers can take those stitches to new places. Tomkies does herself proud with this collection of 250 knitted stitch patterns, with written instructions, a chart and color photo of each, plus recommendations for yarn weight that will best show off that particular stitch. She thoughtfully organizes stitches into subgroups, both typical ("Eyelet and Lace Patterns") and creative ("Loops and Textures"). A handy table of contents with photos helps the indecisive find the right stitch for a given need. A great gift

for a new knitter, this volume is sure to inspire the seasoned crafter as well.

▼ Curls

By Hunter Hammersen

Pantsville Press; \$21.95 (print + ebook); \$19.95 (ebook)
ISBN: 978-0984998258

Exactly what are "curls"? Hunter Hammersen describes them as "versatile, wearable wraps to knit at any gauge," but the utilitarian sound of the subtitle doesn't quite do justice to the charming, sinuous accessories you'll find in her latest book. Hammersen describes how she



was playing with stitch patterns when she realized her swatch had developed a curved shape at top and bottom. Inspired to take things further, she ended up with an entire collection of these swirling accessories—wraps that curve nicely around the body. In addition to an in-depth explanation of curls, the book includes plenty of lovely photography to inspire. Knitters who have collected balls of yarn here and there will love the versatility of the patterns, as Hammersen encourages experimenting with different weights and gauges.

▼ Lace Yarn Studio

By Carol J. Sulcoski

Lark Crafts; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1454708612

Looking for something new and exciting to do with your shelves of lace-weight yarn? *Lace Yarn Studio* features garments and accessories that make grand use of super-thin yarns, complete with an introduction on working with and understanding the fiber content of various lace weights. The more than 25 projects—including



fingerless mitts, hats, sweaters, cardigans and more—are grouped according to the amount of yarn called

for (one, two or three skeins) and thus the time it takes to make them. Though this collection includes its fair share of lace patterns, the yarn is not limited to its namesake designs—you'll find cables, ribbing and plenty of stockinette as well. Fine yarn means fine gauge, so the projects have a refinement about them, making this book perfect for modern, sophisticated knitters. —Erin Slonaker

▼ 60 Quick Knit Baby Essentials

Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95

ISBN: 978-1936096831

Whether you knit for your own little ones or like to shower other folks' tots with knitted love, you'll find plenty of inspiration in the newest addition to the best-selling "60 Quick Knits" series. Showcasing Cascade's Cherub yarn, this collection includes everything the well-dressed baby needs



to start out life cozy and stylish: hats and booties, natch, along with blankets, cardigans, vests, rompers, wee dresses, toys, rattles and bunting to decorate the nursery. This curated collection features well-known designers including Melissa Leapman,

Rosemary Drysdale and Lorna Miser; easy-care yarn, multiple weights and a variety of techniques make this a delightful collection to satisfy all your baby-knitting needs.

▼ Wanderlust

By Tanis Gray

Interweave/F+W; \$18.99

ISBN: 978-1620338315



Drawing from a wide circle of designers, Tanis Gray has assembled a varied collection of hand knits that will

keep needles clicking for a good long time to come. The theme is boho-chic, but Gray avoids the excessively trendy in favor of stylish but wearable options. The book's whopping 46 patterns are organized by type: scarves/wraps, cowls/shawls, hats, mittens/wristers, accessory sets and sweaters. A variety of techniques—lace, cables, colorwork and ribbing, to name a few—and difficulty levels means this collection has a pattern for every knitter, no matter her mood or skill set. Cascade Yarns' bouncy superfine merino Longwood gets star billing; shown in every color under the sun, this superwash yarn ensures projects are easy to care for as you wander the world.

(continued on page 18)

BESTSELLER BOX

Here's what topped the bestseller lists for the first week of March 2015:

Amazon Needlecrafts and Textile Crafts List

1. *The Complete Book of Crochet Designs*, by Linda Schäpper (Lark Crafts)
2. *Curls: Versatile, Wearable Wraps to Knit at Any Gauge*, by Hunter Hammersen (Pantsville Press)
3. *A to Z of Crochet: The Ultimate Guide* (Martingale & Co.)
6. *Wrapped in Color*, by Maie and Taiu Landra (Sixth&Spring Books)
7. *Knitting Fresh Brioche*, by Nancy Marchant (Sixth&Spring Books)

Barnes & Noble Needlework and Fiber Arts List

1. *A to Z of Crochet: The Ultimate Guide* (Martingale & Co.)
3. *The Knowledgeable Knitter*, by Margaret Radcliffe (Storey Publishing)
4. *Crocheting for Dummies*, by Karen Manthey (Wiley)
6. *Knitting Yarns*, by Ann Hood (W.W. Norton)
8. *Contemporary Celtic Crochet*, by Bonnie Barker (Fons & Porter)

BOOK REVIEWS

▼ Felt So Good

By Tone Rørseth

Sellers Publishing; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1416245278

The wonders of wool are front and center in this Scandinavian import, translated for an American audience for the first time. Designer and photo stylist Tone Rørseth brings a passion for felt and a plethora of ideas for what to do with it. With more than 70 projects—small items like cup cozies, larger items like felted pillow covers—there's plenty of inspiration for confident crafters



in this colorful tome. While the instructions are brief, most projects are well within the skill set of an enthusiastic beginner, with glue, simple sewing and basic embroidery helping the projects along. Upcycle a wool garment or dabble in needle-felting; most projects can be completed in an evening or weekend.

▼ Faux Taxidermy Knits

By Louise Walker

David & Charles; \$22.99

ISBN: 978-1446304532

If you get a kick out of the idea of a tiger-skin rug, a fox wrap or a crocodile purse but shudder at the thought of hurting an animal, Louise Walker's take on taxidermy may be just the ticket. Fifteen patterns provide cruelty-free wearables, including polar-bear-shaped mitts, adorable hedgehog slippers, a "mink" stole, and a raccoon hat knit in—what else?—Fun Fur. If you're looking for unique, slightly



out-there touches for your home, try badger or moose heads mounted on plaques, an owl's-nest tea cozy and, yes, even a tiger-skin-inspired rug. Thorough instructions take the knitter from cast-on to finishing, with templates, plenty of charts and diagrams, and a how-to section to keep you on track.

▼ Rustic Modern Knits

By Yumiko Alexander

Interweave/F+W; \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1620336304

As with its predecessor, *Rustic Modern Crochet*, this book focuses on simple shapes, interesting construction and fashion-forward detailing. Yarns knit in muted nature tones en-



hance the sophisticated appeal of the designs: a meshlike shrug based on a button-hole technique, cabled wristers that seem to float across a stockinette background, an asymmetric buttoned scarf with eyelet edging. Patterns are primarily accessories and layering pieces, as Alexander applies her modern sensibility to scarves, shawls, cowls, hats and wristers designed with boho-modern appeal.

▼ Crochet the Perfect Gift

By Kat Goldin

Trafalgar Square Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1570767142

Early-bird crafters looking to hook a handmade holiday may want to start with Goldin's new book, chock-full of items intended for gift giving. These designs work up quickly, taking advantage of crochet's natural speed, moving things along with lacy stitches and thicker yarns. Goldin starts with a primer on basic skills, followed by 30 projects divided according to type: items for home, women, men, kids and babies. Designs are beautifully photographed and feature a range of yarns, from hand-dyed wools to cotton T-shirt yarn to twine and crochet thread. Goldin manages to put a new spin on old favorites: Mittens are made extra-warm with thrums; a pretty capelet features a button closure; a leather buckle makes a tablet cover uber-modern. A mix of easy and intermediate projects means both



newbies and proficient crocheters will find plenty of goodies to make for friends and family.

▼ The Knitting Answer Book

By Margaret Radcliffe

Storey; \$14.95

ISBN: 978-1612124049

▼ The Crochet Answer Book

By Edie Eckman

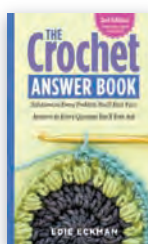
Storey; \$14.95

ISBN: 978-1612124063

Perennially popular troubleshooting guides to knit and crochet, these Answer Books are available now in brand-new revised editions. While these reference volumes are small in size, they are jam-packed with information, promising to solve "every problem you'll ever face" and answer "every question you'll ever ask." Struggling with gauge? Unsure how



to read a pattern? Looking for tips on finishing? It's all here. New to *The Knitting Answer Book*: additional cast-ons and bind-offs, discussion of new needle types, instructions for using two-circular and Magic Loop methods; and details on knitting backward, among other things. *The Crochet Answer Book* has expanded its coverage of techniques like Tunisian crochet, broomstick and hairpin lace and filet



crochet; added illustrations to show both right- and left-handed approaches to techniques; and gives tips on working with novelty yarns, joining motifs and other finishing techniques. Their compact size makes these guides perfect for popping into travel bags, so the wealth of information they provide is always at your fingertips.

▼ Animal Knits for Kids

By Amanda Berry

Barron's; \$16.99

ISBN: 978-1438005317

Take your baby or toddler on a knitted journey around the animal kingdom with Amanda Berry's book of patterns inspired by everyone's favorite furry and feathered friends. Start out with an adorable safari-themed outfit—pants, jacket, desert

"boots," even a pint-sized satchel to hold snacks or a favorite toy. From there, patterns are organized according to habitat: "In the Jungle" features monkey and hippo rattles; "The Reptile House" makes even



the slitheriest creatures appealing in the form of snake mitts; "Polar Regions" are livened up with penguin mittens; "Tropical Seas" are full of stuffed fish toys; and "In the Forest" has a pair of robin-shaped mittens. Pattern sizes range from 3 months to 2T/3T; skill levels range from easy to intermediate, with plenty of choices for beginners.

▼ BiblioCraft

By Jessica Pigza

Stewart, Tabori & Chang; \$27.50

ISBN: 978-1617690969

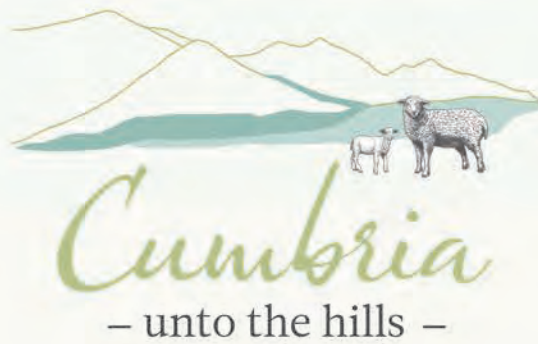
If you're not convinced libraries have relevance in our digital age, you'll want to get your hands on Jessica Pigza's love letter to the stacks. A rare-books librarian in New York, Pigza has plenty of experience helping patrons interested in crafting find obscure or antiquated sources, and she provides a chapter full of tips for navigating one's way around the library, including explanations of different types of libraries, dos and don'ts for a library visit, and using card catalogs and call numbers. In addition, she provides a list of recommended



libraries to visit and a primer on copyright law. If you haven't immediately driven off to explore your local library, you'll want to peruse the projects that form the remainder of the book. Sewing, embroidery, paper-crafts, jewelry making, felting, cross-stitch, quilting—Pigza's contributors used library sources, from bookplates and educational booklets to illuminated manuscripts, to inspire their projects.

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Old School

For our tenth anniversary issue, we return to yarns that are also celebrating their decennials (or more).

By Christina Behnke

1

Lorna's Laces Shepherd Worsted

Specs: Hundreds of colorways; 100% superwash merino wool; 225yds/113g

Distinctions: Shepherd Worsted debuted soon after Lorna's Laces changed hands in 2003 and has been one of the company's bestsellers ever since. Its construction, uncommon for merino, is a gently spun 3-ply that boosts the fiber's silkiness and glow—a fitting backdrop to the vivid hand-dyed tonals and multis.

Projects: Along with the resulting pebbled texture, the colors are all you need to make simple patterns shine.



2

The Fibre Co./Kelbourne Woolens Terra

Specs: 27 colors; 40% baby alpaca/40% merino/20% silk; 98yds/50g

Distinctions: Even with the adjustments to the original 60/20/20 fiber blend, Terra has remained a staple in The Fibre Co.'s collection since premiering at the company's first TNNA show, in 2005. Analogously shaded slubs in the strand produce a singular opalescent fabric, while the singles spin gives stitch patterns a charming look.

Projects: Considering the price point and yardage—and silky-soft hand—neckwear and hats are your best bets.

3

Zitron/Skacel Collection Trekking XXL

Specs: 75 colorways; 75% new wool/25% nylon; 459yds/100g

Distinctions: More than 20 years ago—long before the Great Sock Craze of the mid-to-late aughts—Trekking, which is thought to have set the standard for the ubiquitous self-patterning sock yarn, was born. Early bloggers used plenty of it to knit up socks in 2005.

Projects: "One skein makes a pair" remains one of the yarn industry's greatest marketing innovations, but the tightly spun, rounded strand and color gradations also make this a great choice for crochet motifs.



Rowan Creative Focus Worsted

Specs: 22 colors; 75% wool/25% alpaca; 220yds/100g

Distinctions: Originally part of the erstwhile Nashua Handknits line, Creative Focus Worsted celebrates its tenth anniversary this summer. Unapologetically toothy—a nice offset to the saturated palette and gentle luster—this singles yarn boasts exceptional durability thanks to its alpaca content (guard hairs included).

Projects: The robust hand and great yardage seem custom-spun for felted knits and rugged autumn cardigans.

4





5

Cascade Yarns Luna

Specs: 48 solid and 25 hand-painted colorways; 100% Peruvian cotton; 82yds/50g

Distinctions: Developed in 2005 for spring 2006, this corkscrew-style 2-ply is spun from soft Tanguis cotton that's twisted just enough to retain maximum loft without shedding or splitting. The resulting nubby texture imparts a casual look to any pattern.

Projects: Machine-washability and -dryability make baby projects and washcloths the obvious choices; the rich colors and natural luminosity also lend themselves to summery tops.

Trendsetter Yarns Zucca

Specs: 18 colors; 58% Tactel [nylon]/42% polyamid; 71yds/50g

Distinctions: Since debuting around the time of this magazine, Zucca has continued to fascinate knitters with its uniquely plush, velvety texture. Constructed like an eyelash, it nonetheless carries the qualities of a chenille. Two types of synthetic fiber—one matte, one glossy—create depth.

Projects: Fur remains a trend, so use it anywhere you would a faux: trims, hats, scarves, you name it. Or go all out with a soft and fluffy blanket.

6



7

Prism Tencil Tape

Specs: Hundreds of hand-dyed colorways; 100% Tencel; 120yds/57g

Distinctions: After premiering in select shops in 2005, Tencil Tape hit the general LYS market in 2007. Its construction is essentially that of a jersey-knit I-cord, resulting in a satiny sheen that rivals silk. Tencel fiber lacks memory, so keep knit patterns simple and rely on Prism's colors to create that wow factor. Crochet patterns work up with a unique, almost scaled appearance.

Projects: Anything calling for lavish drape, like shawls and formal tops.



8

Brown Sheep Company Cotton Fleece

Specs: 54 colors; 80% cotton/20% merino wool; 215yds/100g

Distinctions: Introduced in 2000, Cotton Fleece pairs the smooth, crisp hand of pima cotton with a hint of downy softness, compliments of the merino—just be sure to care for it as you would any fine wool. The tripe-ply crepe spin lends loft and crimp.

Projects: Flaunt the excellent stitch definition in any high-texture stitch pattern: It performs equally well in cables, lace and knit/purl patterns and takes to crochet beautifully.

Universal Yarn Deluxe Worsted

Specs: 134 dyed and 5 undyed colors; 100% wool; 220yds/100g

Distinctions: Along with Deluxe Chunky, Deluxe Worsted was one of Universal's cornerstone yarns when the company was founded 10 years ago. Since then, the color selection has continued to multiply. Crisp on the needles or hook, this workhorse softens considerably after a bath.

Projects: Smooth, rounded and a bit toothy, this is the ideal yarn for beginning knitters. The price and yardage also make it a great choice for large-scale projects.

9



Building Better Business at TNNA

TNNA hosted a successful show in January in Phoenix, where we were excited to offer something new to TNNA retailers. We launched Building Better Business—our first-ever business-only education day—which proved to be a huge hit. The sold-out event drew close to 100 retailers from across the country. Attendees gathered on Thursday night for a mixer, which was a great opportunity to network with fellow attendees and instructors. On Friday, a keynote speaker presentation got the day started; the retailers then split into their chosen of two educational tracks, one titled “Business Nuts and Bolts” and the other “Mastering Marketing.” Our speakers for the day were Gwen Bortner, Judith Carter, Liz Gipson, Zontee Hou and Patty Lyons. They energized, motivated and inspired the crowd with topics including social media, managing cash flow, making money and visual merchandising.

The overwhelming majority of attendees

said that they would recommend the classes to other TNNA members. Josie Flores, owner of Cardigans in Santa Barbara, California, said, “In one word: outstanding. The materials were wonderful. We were given helpful tools to take back to our businesses. A great value for all of the takeaway knowledge.” Cheryl Nachtrieb of Recycled Lamb in Golden, Colorado, was inspired to redecorate: “I took the marketing track, and it was a great session of classes. I especially liked the Visual Marketing class, where we learned how to present our products so they sell well. Now I can go back and start my Pinterest account.”

“If you didn’t get a chance to experience Building Better Business this time, I hope you will participate in future classes. It provides education and forges relationships you can’t find anywhere else. It is an absolute bargain at any price,” instructor Liz Gipson says. Another teacher, Gwen Bortner, exclaimed, “It’s good for everyone, whether your business is yarn,

needlepoint, spinning or weaving. It is about business, not your craft. One thing we have heard over and over again is that retailers want a chance to network with one another. So we included a networking component allowing retailers to meet. It was a great way to peer mentor one another.”

We are already planning for the next Building Better Business day at the summer show in Columbus, where we will celebrate TNNA’s 40th anniversary. Of course the show is the place to see and buy the latest products from our vendors, but don’t forget that shows offer so much more—attendees say that the chance to meet with others who share their love and passion for the needle-arts is worth the trip. We invite you to join TNNA and plan a trip so you can experience this for yourself. The Columbus show dates are May 30–June 1, with education beginning on May 28. Watch for more details and information at www.tnna.org.

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

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Use Wellness Research to Your Advantage

Craft Yarn Council has been conducting consumer research every two years since 1994. As in the past, the 2014 survey was completed in October, and for the fifth time it was conducted online. An impressive 3,178 knitters and crocheters from across the country participated in the survey.

CYC again commissioned Research Inc. of Atlanta to gather intelligence on yarn trends among those who have knit or crocheted a project and bought yarn during the past year. Many questions asked in previous surveys were included to establish trends, and for the first time health and wellness questions were added. The sheer volume of respondents substantiates trends in consumers' perception of these crafts and their motivation to purchase yarn.

Despite having to complete a very long survey, needleworkers in all age groups participated. Thirty-two percent were between the ages of 55 and 64; a combined 55 percent were 45–64. While 60 percent of respondents know how to both knit and crochet, almost half (48 percent)

report they are primarily crocheters, 32 percent primarily knitters and 20 percent do both crafts equally. Regardless of their technique preference or age, 65 percent agree that the reason they crochet/knit is because it provides a creative outlet; 51 percent say they enjoy making things for others; 44 percent say it provides a sense of accomplishment; and 33 percent say it makes them feel productive and helps them cope with stress.

For the past year, CYC has been promoting the health benefits of these crafts to attract new consumers. As a result, articles have appeared in a variety of print publications and reports have appeared on TV news programs. Together with data collected by Betsan Corkhill, former senior neurophysiotherapist and director of Stitchlinks (stitchlinks.com), CYC's research presents a compelling picture of the benefits of crocheting and knitting. Retailers are urged to capitalize on these findings in their advertising, as themes for classes, and to make their store *the* gathering place for this enthusiastic fiber community.

The first wellness question asked knitters and crocheters to list the benefits they receive from their craft. Top benefits include: feeling of accomplishment (93 percent); reduced stress (85 percent); improved mood (68 percent); and sense of confidence (56 percent). Almost all (90 percent) of the respondents said that the crafts improve their mood.

Crocheters and knitters enjoy working in groups. Seven in 10 (69 percent) report that they have stitched as part of a group and created friendships as a result. They say the positive benefits when knitting and crocheting with others are: Social (78 percent); happiness (59 percent); sense of community (58 percent); pride (53 percent).

In future columns, we'll report more survey findings, which we hope will be helpful in developing strategic marketing plans. The members of CYC are committed to inspiring these enthusiasts with innovative products and fashion-forward designs both in print and on the web, along with programs to reach and educate new consumers.

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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Artisan and Groovy, Authentic and New

When I think about the most recent TNNA show in Phoenix, one word comes to mind: Stella. No, there was not a production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* to be seen. Instead, there was Yarn Group Happy Hour and a bottle of Stella Artois in my hand. More than anything, that raucous event defined how something new is afoot at TNNA events these days. If you're not attending, you're simply missing out. And it wasn't that long ago that missing a TNNA show was not perceived as missing out at all.

For the sake of full disclosure, I'll admit I once hated attending our trade shows—and I'm an enthusiastic person by nature. Nevertheless, I remain an introvert. Lots of people in one place isn't my thing. Neither is making small talk. Traditionally, you would have been just as likely to see me hightailing it back to my hotel room to hide as you would to see me on the show floor. But that's changed.

The most recent show in Phoenix was a

phoenix itself, a phenomenon rising to the skies. And cocktails are just a part of it. Is the winter show now the best spot in the nation to ogle, caress, inhale and purchase all the yarns and notions that your shop needs to be successful? I proclaim that it is—even without the influence of alcohol.

Wintertime TNNA has become a boutique show featuring the artisan and legacy companies that are most eager to do business with you. I found hand dyers whose businesses are not only growing but have the infrastructure in place to accommodate yarn shop orders. They are developing mesmerizing new dyeing techniques and projects. They are growing into their own. I had valuable conversations with the principal dyers for these companies and talked about partnerships that will make their offerings unique to my shop.

And the legacy companies who attend are the ones most interested in supporting LYS owners; otherwise, they wouldn't be there. "We come to the show because we know

how important it is for shop owners to see our entire collection, with the actual garments, in person. The materials we provide our sales reps are great, but holding the actual skein in your hand can't be replaced by the little snips on color cards. And we value one-on-one face time with our customers," said Heather McVickar, director of sales for Classic Elite Yarns. "The shows provide us the opportunity to sit down and talk with our customers. How else can we learn what works and doesn't in their stores? We tailor our collections to the needs of shops, and we learn about those needs at the show."

The show specials offered by virtually every legacy exhibitor were worth their weight in gold. One of our yarn-shop colleagues from Colorado was able to cover the costs of her airfare to Phoenix and her hotel by utilizing the numerous show specials that were offered. If coming to the show and buying product there pays for itself, why would you stay home? I'll drink to that.



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TKGA Joins the Digital Age

The Knitting Guild Association has gone digital. For just \$25 per year, individuals can join, renew or give a gift membership to TKGA as a digital member. (Our regular membership, at \$35 a year, is still available for those who prefer print.) With a digital membership, individuals will receive all of the same great benefits as print-edition members, minus the physical copy of *Cast On*, our membership publication. These benefits include:

- One year of TKGA membership (two-year memberships are also available).
- Instant access to the digital version of *Cast On* (access it at TKGA's website, TKGA.com). The arrival of each issue is always eagerly anticipated by all of our members; with a digital membership, it is available instantaneously.
- Access to TKGA's new blog, "Needle-less to Say." I developed this blog as a tool to help members truly feel a part of TKGA—everything from what happens at a photo shoot to the steps involved in choosing designs for the magazine. As with all things TKGA, education is our

goal, so we hope the blog will help members understand decisions we make: why we ask designers for certain things when they submit patterns, the process our staff goes through to create the publication and more. I update it regularly, so check back often.

- Access to TKGA's monthly online e-newsletter, EnGauge: Find out what is happening with TKGA members and local guilds around the country, learn about plans for our annual conferences and anything else that is new with your knitting association.
- Eligibility to enter in monthly members-only contests on TKGA.com: In each issue of *Cast On*, TKGA reviews products and books that are new on the knitting scene. Selected items from those reviews, as well as actual garments that are featured in the magazine, are won each month by lucky TKGA members. Follow TKGA on Facebook to be the first to know about each month's contest.
- Eligibility to participate in TKGA Correspondence Courses and Master Knitter Hand and Machine

Knitting Programs, the strongest education in knitting, available only to our members. Learn from the best knitters around and strengthen your knitting skills with TKGA.

- Correspondence regarding upcoming TKGA events: 2015 marks the thirtieth anniversary of TKGA. The conference in San Diego promises to be chock-full of celebrations focusing on our members.

TKGA also offers new opportunities for retailers and other fiber-related companies to advertise, now that we have joined the digital arena. When you advertise in *Cast On* magazine, your company will automatically be linked in our digital publication at no extra cost. That means you will have instant reach to more than 10,000 TKGA members, which is certain to translate into sales for your products. Advertising on our website is also now available.

To explore advertising possibilities, reach thousands of TKGA members and join TKGA in the digital arena, contact Sadie McFarland at smcfarland@tkga.com.

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



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CGOA and Your Local Yarn Shop

Local yarn shops, take a look around: Crochet is trending everywhere—on fashion runways, in retail shops, on Pinterest, and on people out and about wherever we go. Along with the increased number of sightings of crochet, the Crochet Guild of America has also grown. In the past year, the membership association has increased in numbers by about 10 percent. As of mid-January, we boasted 111 member chapters across the country and nearly 3,200 individual CGOA members. How can local yarn shops capitalize on these trends and the growth in the number of avid crocheters while selling more crochet supplies in the process?

We would love to partner with local yarn shops that are interested in hosting chapter meetings or helping CGOA grow new chapters in their area. Imagine having dozens of loyal stitchers visiting your shop regularly to meet with fellow crocheters. They're bound to be

enticed by the wares on your shelves, turning interest into sales. Retail partners are invited to become members of CGOA and be recognized in our member publication, *Crochet!*

Additionally, we welcome local yarn shops to be a friend to CGOA and help crochet enthusiasts everywhere enjoy and expand the art of this craft. Is your staff crochet-savvy? Are your employees welcoming to crocheters who venture through your doors? Will potential customers find crocheted models alongside the knitted ones on display? If you don't already have someone on your staff able to talk, teach and create all things crochet, you might consider enlisting a customer or two who have crochet in their repertoire to help you out.

Chances are they're pining for the opportunity to show off their skills. Many crocheters tell the sad tale of being shunned at their local yarn shops. Rather than turning them away (intentionally or not), why not turn them into loyal

customers by offering them a friendly place to call their go-to yarn spot? Actively welcome them and they will shop with you.

CGOA's annual summer member conference is returning to the West Coast. We'll be at the Town and Country Resort & Convention Center in beautiful Mission Valley in San Diego from July 22–25. The best way to develop and nurture new crocheters is through education. The conference schedule is jam-packed with classes that teach techniques as well as projects. We also hope that local yarn shops will join us on the exhibition floor, providing crochet "make and take" projects. Turn a quick, fun project of your own into the must-have item of the show.

If you are interested in joining CGOA as a retail member, participating in the conference this summer or finding out more about how to entice crocheters to your store, contact us at www.crochet.org.

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

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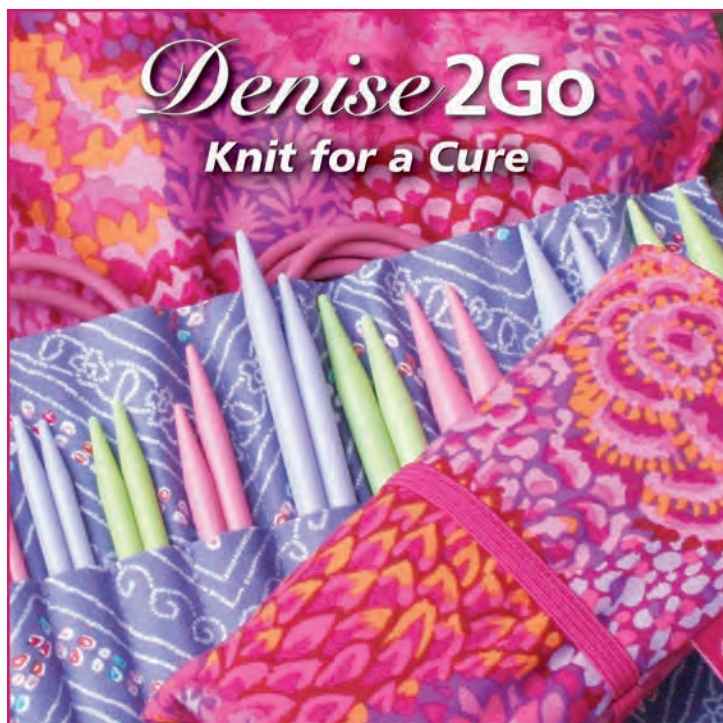
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Sell Patterns, Sell Yarn

Our In-Store Pattern Sales (ISPS) program continues to grow—in January, more than 1,300 shops were registered for ISPS, and more than 65,000 patterns were available through the service. This program allows participating LYSes to sell patterns that designers have made available through the service directly to customers in the store. (Customers pay full retail price for the patterns; stores and designers each receive a percentage of the proceeds.) Purchases are saved in customers' own Ravelry libraries and can be printed by the shop if desired. Each month, store owners receive a Ravelry invoice for all patterns sold during the previous month. With easy access to so many patterns, no purchases required up-front and no Ravelry fees to shop owners, this service has grown every month since its launch in 2011.

Amazing Threads in Maple Grove, Minnesota, is a consistent top ISPS seller, with customers purchasing hundreds of these patterns each month. We reached out to owner Bobbi

Kreb with some questions about how she makes In-Store Pattern Sales work for her shop.

What do you like most about this service?

With ISPS, we never have to disappoint a customer with the words, "I'm so sorry, but we are out of that pattern." If I make the right guess on what might be hot, paper patterns are good. But I have multiple drawers full of paper patterns that are outdated or were never purchased. This equates to a loss of revenue.

Do customers tend to purchase patterns as part of a total project package?

Some customers purchase only patterns, but that is rare, because we most often have a sample made and they want to make the project. Our goal is to not just sell a pattern. If that's all we sold, we wouldn't be in business very long.

How do you make In-Store Pattern Sales work for shop classes? Students must purchase product from the store and use the ISPS pattern if they want to be in the class.

Most of Amazing Threads' ISPS customers are Ravelry users who purchase multiple

patterns from your shop. What do they like most about this service? We explain that this is a service in which designers make their patterns available to us, and we stress the cooperative relationship between the designer and store. When a customer doesn't have a Ravelry account, we explain the site's value and give them a card we had printed with directions on how to set up an account.

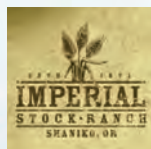
Do you have a dedicated computer for In-Store Sales? Staff have access to a tablet and a computer to assist with sales. We often go to Ravelry to look up pattern possibilities for our customers.

What makes your shop's top-selling ISPS patterns stand out? We have great samples. We will not make a sample and prompt a sale if the designer won't put the pattern up for ISPS. Customers are driven to projects based on samples. Samples sell yarn. If we can make a sample and the pattern is available via Ravelry In-Store Pattern Sales, it is a win-win for the customer and the shop.

For more information about In-Store Pattern Sales and other Ravelry services for local yarn shops, please visit ravelry.com/yarnshops.

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The Fine Print

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Hints for reading contracts.

Leases, software licenses, design agreements—they go by many names, but all of them are contracts. A contract is simply a document that memorializes an agreement between two parties, making their agreement easier to enforce and clarifying their rights and obligations. Sounds easy enough, but reading contracts can be trying if you're not used to the technical lingo. Here are some tips to help you parse the legalese.

The big picture

Start by looking at the overall structure of the document. Like most knitting patterns, contracts tend to follow a general format. At the top of the contract you'll find an introductory paragraph that sets the stage, much like the romance copy in a pattern. Typical things you'll see in the introduction: the names and addresses of the parties to the contract; the subject matter; the date the contract was signed or goes into effect; and a statement that the parties intend this contract to be legally binding.

Lawyers love to assign the parties to a contract a shortened version of their names. Think of this as the contract's own set of knitting abbreviations. You'll often find definitions of terms near the beginning of a contract, just as a good knitting pattern will define exactly how the designer wants you to work an "ssk." Take a good look at the definitions to make sure they make sense and are correct. For example, a license to use computer software may define "Term" to spell out exactly how long the license is effective. Make sure the definition cites the same amount of time you and the software company agreed upon.

Knitting patterns next take you through the step-by-step construction process; contracts likewise include paragraphs that spell out the duties (what each party is obligated to do) and the rights (what each party is entitled to get) under the contract. Good contracts will contain paragraph headings that signal what the paragraph is about.

At the end of the contract will be a signature page or block, with room for all parties to sign and date. Occasionally contracts will have "exhibits" attached—these are copies of documents that become part of the official agreement (a vending agreement for a fiber show, for example, might include a drawing of the booth). Make

sure they accurately reflect what you and the other party agreed upon.

Hot buttons

Certain provisions are so important that they should trigger extra scrutiny when you're perusing a draft contract.

- **Termination.** Can either party get out of the contract early, and if so, under what circumstances? Are there penalties for early termination? What kind of formal notice has to be given?

- **Indemnity:** The obligation of one party to reimburse the other for a loss. If a customer trips over a box of yarn in your shop and sues the landlord, will you be obligated to pay such costs as the landlord's legal fees, insurance deductible or court-awarded damages? Because they involve financial guarantees, tread carefully where indemnities are concerned.

- **Intellectual property issues.** If trademark, patent or copyright issues are raised by the subject matter of the contract, make sure you understand who owns what and who has the right to use what for how long.

- **Penalties.** If one party is late in performing, what penalties are due? For example, if you are late paying a monthly bill, will interest start accruing, too? How much?

- **Insurance.** Is one party responsible for obtaining insurance? For how much? Does the purchaser have to name the other party as a payee under the policy? How can the other party be certain that a valid policy protects him?

- **Warranties and/or representations.** These are guarantees that you provide the other party. If you agree to design a garment or write an article, you'll probably be asked to represent that you didn't violate anyone else's copyright in creating the item. Make sure you're comfortable providing such guarantees and that you understand what happens if someone claims you violated them.

- **Integration clause.** Often a contract will include a provision that says something like, "This contract (including any attachments or exhibits) contains the entire understanding and agreement between all the parties as to the subject matter."

This means that the contract consists only of what appears in the document and excludes conversations, emails or meetings. That also means that if you want something to be a part of the document, you must spell it out in the contract itself.

Make or break time

In an ideal world, all of us would have access to a lawyer who could help us interpret legal documents free of charge. The real world is harsher: You have to pay for legal advice. If a particular contract is critical to your business or your financial security, or if the terms seem so incomprehensible or oppressive that you have major qualms, it makes sense to pay an attorney to review it.

Keep in mind, too, that when negotiating a contract, what's not in a contract can be every bit as important as what is. An attorney who frequently deals with business contracts can identify provi-

Looking After Number One

Don't sign a document you don't understand. If you have questions about a provision, ask the other party to clarify rather than make a possibly incorrect assumption. Then put the clarification into the document so there's no question that it's part of your agreement. Make sure you save signed copies of all contracts you enter into, as well as any notes you make about the terms. Even if you use an online signing app to "sign" the papers and retain a copy in your email program, make sure you print out a paper copy and keep it in a safe place. If a dispute arises or you have a question about the precise terms of the agreement, you'll want quick and easy access to the paperwork.

sions that ought to be in the document but aren't. There may be federal, state or local laws that govern the form of a contract, give you a certain amount of time to rescind the contract, or require that certain kinds of disclosures be included. An experienced lawyer can not only help explain the provisions of a contract to you, but can also give you a sense for whether the terms are consistent with business practices in your area, and may help negotiate a better deal for you and your business.

Knitwear designer and book author **Carol J. Sulcoski**, a former attorney, creates hand-dyed yarns and fibers for her company Black Bunny Fibers.



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The Linde Shift

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Private Branding

BY MICHAEL DEL VECCHIO

A Why creating a brand program for your shop may be right for you.

As an independent yarn store owner, you know what it's like to create a collection to sell to your customers. You know it takes constant marketing, new product and new designs to keep them engaged. And you've learned what your customers love and what they don't. What if you could take all of that experience, skip the middleman, and go right to the source for yarn? It could mean developing a custom product that has lasting success. Or it may create more work than you ever could have imagined.

Collaborating with dyers

In the summer of 2009, Sheri Berger of The Loopy Ewe, a major web-based retailer of yarn, fabric, fiber and notions based in Fort Collins, Colorado, had the idea to begin a private-label program for yarn. "We wanted lines that we weren't finding out there, and we couldn't find the colors and quantities we needed from the company we'd been buying fingering solids from," she says. Working with an independent dyer in the United States, Berger spent the remainder of the summer and fall seasons picking colors—92 in all—for the Loopy Solid Series. In the summer of 2010, the yarn was up on the site, available for purchase.

Since then, the Loopy Solid series has enjoyed growing success, and Berger has gone on to add more custom lines. It hasn't been easy, though. "Picking out colors for our Solid Series was a lot of work—much harder than you'd think it would be," she admits. "And I was surprised to learn how long the turnaround time is." However, working with U.S.-based hand-dyers has proved to be a real coup and continues to support the success of the line. "They do all of the millwork—dealing with the mills and the dye studio, confirming color matches—which takes some of the burden off of me," Berger says.

Developing a mill-direct program

Nancy Queen, owner of Noble Knits in Exton, Pennsylvania, has also taken a few steps toward building a private branded line of products by working directly with a mill, but overall, the results have been hard earned. "Our original test orders took more than nine months to receive and didn't ship complete. Plus, we ran

into language issues," says Queen.

Ultimately, through careful analysis of all the issues—including the amount of capital tied up in one yarn; the costs associated with storage, design and marketing; and the challenges associated with shipment and minimums—Queen found herself truly appreciating the contributions yarn manufacturers make to their stores and rethinking how she herself approaches the concept: "Exploring a private-label program gave us newfound respect for the established yarn suppliers who are doing it right: staying on trend and supplying us with fabulous fibers, good pattern support and photography, and regular delivery."

The nuts and bolts

Yarn store owners have a multitude of opportunities to find producers here and abroad, through vendors they're already working with or at industry trade and craft shows here and abroad, including TNNA, Pitti Filati (held twice yearly in Italy) and The Handarbeit Show (held each spring in Germany). Mill owners and their agents work seasonally to produce new collections that are shown to yarn vendors around the globe. Shop owners can expect to see the results of the newest technologies in making yarn, sample colors, and initial pricing (not including shipping) on the minimum order quantities (MOQs). Shop owners who express interest can expect ball samples and color cards for the quantities they're interested in within a few weeks; submitting an order—including number and type of color—seals the deal.

Serkan Zengin, owner of Purple Yarns (a partnership of mills throughout Turkey that work to produce basic, fancy and hand-tied yarns for customers around the world), has worked with stores in Europe and the United States to bring in some of its own products under a store label. He cautions, "The most important things stores need to be aware of are the minimums and the timeline. MOQs can range from 50kg per color to 300kg per color and beyond. Then, from date

of order, it's a minimum six to eight weeks for delivery."

Is it worth it?

It's time to do some math. What's the final cost that customers will pay for an exclusive product? Bearing in mind the cost of the fiber, the shipping, the customs fees, the storage, and the marketing and design dollars, does it make sense? Knowing this, how quickly will the initial investment be recouped? Looking at minimum-order quantities, even at 50kg per color, skeins packaged in 100g hanks will yield 500 skeins per color. To get a return on investment in the first year, that might mean selling two sweaters' worth of yarn per color, per week.

With the data in hand, store owners must decide whether it's a risk worth taking. Consider the myriad occurrences that can throw a monkey

Keep It Simple

Looking at new product from a manufacturer can be overwhelming, especially considering how the machines that create innovative new product are constantly evolving. However, a simple approach can be the best approach: Stick with a great basic to launch your line, such as a luxury blend or workhorse superwash wool. Let your color story and inspiration shine, and steer clear of trendy and fashion yarns that may look stale on a shelf after a season and may not yield a return on your investment when the trend has run its course.

wrench into the works: the currency exchange rate, goods shipping late and missing the season, the potential for the wrong yarn color or weight to arrive. Still, the benefits to shop owners are many, including being able to customize a product you love, to support it with designs, to market it to the customers you know so well—and, of course, to increase your profit margins. Ultimately, being able to express your enthusiasm and excitement in a tangible way, and to pass that along to your customers, is the most influential ingredient for a successful, lasting in-store program.

Michael del Vecchio is an independent consultant and sales representative based in Charlotte, North Carolina. He specializes in product development and merchandising.



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Sounding Human

BY TARA SWIGER

How to find your voice and write effectively on social media, for your blog and in emails.

There's nothing quite as fulfilling as a pleasant conversation with a customer, one in which you help her find what she's looking for, bond over a mutual love of shawls or teach her something new. You both leave these interactions feeling happy, connected and satisfied.

Many people—especially those in retail—are skilled at interacting with customers face to face. But sometimes when we try to build those same relationships with an online audience, we feel awkward, our conversations stilted. How can we both connect with them and at the same time convince them to come into the shop?

Making the connection

For those of us accustomed to getting real-time responses and feedback, the act of writing and posting online can seem like shouting into a face-

educational content, and entertaining with stories and jokes.

If your writing becomes too formal or stilted, picture your favorite customer and then write directly to her. Barbra Pushies, co-owner of The Yarnover Truck, says that when she posts online, she imagines that she is talking to her personal knitting group, whom she describes as "ladies who love their craft, appreciate good-quality yarns, and are educated, a little dorky/nerdy and very snarky." Remember: You aren't "posting online"; you're having a conversation with your customers.

Get comfortable

Like any other business skill, being comfortable online takes time and practice. To begin with, you can bring your in-person voice online easily by literally "speaking" your posts through the use of voice-to-text software. Dictate your post into your phone and then type it out word for word, or have an employee write it down for you as you speak. (Tip: Whenever you explain something in a particularly clear way to a customer in your shop, take a

new yarns as they come in, Instagram is for you. If you like to share quotes, snippets and links to your favorite patterns and yarns, Twitter works best.

Know what you want to say

If posting online frustrates you because you feel—or have been told—you *have* to post something, the pressure will make your posts seem random and ineffective. Don't get caught up in putting just anything out there. Commit to communicating effectively. Pushies admits, "Sitting down each day with no guidelines can make coming up with something to say a bit overwhelming."

To avoid this frustration, be clear on what it is you want to say to your customers before you sit down to post. Ask yourself: What action do I want them to take—register for a class or come in to see the new yarn? What do I want them to know? What do they need to know in order to take the action (time and subject of the class, what they could make with the new yarn, etc.)? Do I have a story, inspiration or customer experience to share that will make them feel more connected to me and my business (pictures of projects made by former students, why I love a particular yarn, an action shot of a teacher working one on one with students, etc.)?

Knowing beforehand what she wants to say has made it easier for Virginia Johnson of Gather Here in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to have an active Twitter and Instagram feed, with multiple posts every day. "I wasn't afraid to say who we were and why we thought continuing the tradition of handcraft was important," she says.

Look at your calendar of classes, sales and events and make a schedule. Pushies has found that "having a schedule of what to say each day helps me more than anything. It keeps me from getting overwhelmed and having to think too much." Consistency online will pay off in the long run. As Pushies found, "being 'human' online has helped tremendously with our customer connection. When they come to the store, they are more comfortable with us and will reference conversations from our online postings. The connections feel richer as we communicate more regularly."

Speak Normally, and Carry a Mobile Phone

To avoid sounding stilted or robotic in your online writing, keep these "being human" rules in mind.

- **Write directly to one person.** Picture your best customer and write directly to her.
- **Don't be more formal in your writing than you are in person.** Barbra Pushies says, "My actual voice online is just me. I try to talk to our customers as if they were my friends; I try to be an actual person, not just a company spewing marketing words."
- **Make it personal.** Use "I," not "we," unless you're writing about something you did with others.
- **Share more.** In face-to-face conversations, you don't just talk about your products; you share other interests with your customers. Take this online by breaking up your marketing messages with links to projects and ideas you love, articles your customers will appreciate or, say, funny cat photos (if it fits your shop's brand).
- **Be authentic.** Pushies found that "including a bit of sarcasm or being honest about something that hasn't gone well or that makes you frustrated makes things seem more real. I don't want to be negative online, but I also don't want to sound like a peppy cheerleader every day—I want to sound like a human being."

less void. To make your social media posts effective and stress-free, focus on the goal: to be useful, educational and entertaining. You want to build relationships. Aim to do that exactly as you would in person, by sharing resources and ideas, providing

minute to jot down what you said, then share your words online the next time you're at the computer.)

You can also make yourself more comfortable by choosing online tools that are suited to your skills and interests. If you love to take pictures of

To get more comfortable online, check out Tara Swiger's book *Market Yourself*, published by Cooperative Press. You can get a signed copy of her book or attend one of her online or in-person workshops at TaraSwiger.com.

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Who's Got the Button?

BY PAMELA WYNNE BUTLER

When Gail and Hannah Thiessen opened The Sheep's Stockings in Marshalltown, Iowa, in 2013, the mother/daughter team didn't immediately stock buttons.

They weren't inspired by the selection available through the big button vendors and, with several large craft-centric chain stores nearby and few customers knitting garments, they weren't sure it would be a wise investment. Now, two years later, they've built a solid base of knitters and

Finding and displaying the best fasteners for your shop.

Vintage buttons—either unused “dead stock” buttons or those that have already had a life on another garment—are an excellent alternative. An affordable way to purchase high-quality materials, going vintage creates a supply of unique pieces in natural materials like leather, metal, wood, shell and horn. And of course reusing buttons is a sustainable alternative to buying new. Vintage buttons

be able to support another small business.”

Some smaller distributors offer specialty buttons, including several vendors who focus on natural materials and artisan-made buttons. Virginia Johnson buys buttons for Gather Here from these sellers to supplement the vintage treasures, and she occasionally buys overstock buttons from local fashion designers. Think creatively, ask around, and remember that building an inventory of interesting buttons will likely mean gathering them from multiple sources.

Fasten Up

Buttons generally come in three shapes: shanked, flat and novelty. Buttons with tall shanks are best suited to worsted and heavier-weight yarns, since they can flop and hang down on finer fabrics. Flat buttons with two or four holes work with any garment but should be raised with a yarn shank as deep as the knitted fabric. Novelty buttons include fun shapes; avoid sharp edges or irregular bits that can snag fabric. Although it's tempting to pair novelty buttons with babies' garments, choose small, flat buttons that are difficult to grab, and sew them on securely. Fine yarns, cotton, linen and silk require small, lightweight buttons to avoid weighing down the garment. Heftier buttons should be reserved for more structured fabrics. Check your shop samples and most popular patterns. Do you have buttons suitable for them? A garment should also have cohesive care instructions—if a sweater's yarn is machine-washable, the buttons should be as well.

crocheters who regularly make full sweaters and cardigans, and they're beginning to carry buttons for them.

There are plenty of reasons for a yarn shop to carry these notions. Stocking buttons that appeal to your customers means they can find everything they need to complete a project under one roof—yours. Choosing and displaying a small stock of carefully curated buttons can elevate your shop's brand, and if a customer isn't certain which buttons to choose when buying a sweater's worth of yarn, it's a great way to get her back to the shop: “Come see us again when you're ready to pick out some buttons.”

Going to the source

The selection of buttons offered by large distributors is similar to those carried at big-box craft stores—predominately plastic or inexpensive woods. Customers seeking “bargain” buttons are likely to go there for them, since those stores are able to offer deep discounts. But many knitters and crocheters look for special buttons that do justice to the labor and expense they've invested in their handmade garments, or for natural materials to pair with the natural fibers you sell in your shop.

are often sold in large lots at flea markets, antiques stores and from sellers on Etsy and eBay. Of course, these buttons will need to be cleaned; count on some being broken or unusable.

If you don't want to shop for vintage buttons yourself, seek out a collector who will search for you, remove broken buttons, and perhaps even clean and group them into matching sets. Virginia Johnson buys buttons for Gather Here in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from a local couple who bring her a shoebox full of dead stock and estate-sale buttons every quarter. “We spend a lot of time cleaning those buttons and removing threads and wires from them,” she notes. “We love that they don't end up in a landfill.”

If you'd like to stock unique new buttons, look for small independent producers online, at local craft and fiber fairs, in the vendor booths at trade shows, fiber festivals and industry gatherings, and at fashion, bead and textile events. Kristine Vejar buys buttons for A Verb for Keeping Warm in Berkeley, California, from a collector she met at Stitches West, and she is always on the lookout for more: “Whenever I attend yarn and fabric shows, I seek out the button vendors first to see if their buttons would be a good fit for my shop. It feels great to

Putting them on display

The classic plastic button tube—a clear plastic cylinder with screw-on lid that comes in various sizes—certainly works well as a display. But many customers enjoy lingering over a beautiful bowl of vintage buttons, sifting, searching and sorting through them for a single special piece; others prefer standing before a neatly organized rainbow of products so they can pluck out a card or bag with ease.

Vintage and single buttons can be sorted into containers by size and/or color. If you put together your own curated or matched sets, sew them onto cards with holes punched at the top and display like needles and other notions. Loose buttons can be effectively displayed in any transparent vessel or anything that has drawers or compartments: jewelry boxes, test tubes, cupcake tins. A Verb for Keeping Warm has button-filled mason jars on the front counter, while Gather Here uses a 6-foot-tall antique library card catalog with retrofitted drawers; buttons are stitched to a card and displayed on the front of each compartment.

Your customers may already be buying vintage and handmade buttons directly from artisans and collectors online, but there's no substitute for the hands-on experience of choosing buttons for a special piece that represents hours of labor—for laying out the different options, stepping back and seeing how they transform the garment.

Hannah Thiessen observes, “A button suggests how the person wearing it feels about the piece. Buttons are like jewelry for your knitted item, and they communicate a lot about the knitter wearing it.”

Pamela Wynne Butler, a writer and knitwear designer, lives in Flint, Michigan.

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Be Savvy in Your Sales

Keep your inventory moving.

BY HEATHER GOOCH

Holding regular sales is killing your business,” designer, trainer and yarn shop consultant Gwen Bortner declared to a group of surprised yarn shop owners during a business seminar at The National NeedleArts Association’s recent winter meeting. For some shops and customers, Bortner believes that “if you do an anniversary sale every year, most people won’t buy for weeks beforehand because they

items that just won’t move. But they also hold the occasional clearance sale to move out old inventory. “The previous owner loved to buy yarn. Between her older inventory and our own things that weren’t selling, we had a good bit to move. We decided to let our email list know that we were hosting a ‘Yarns from the Vault’ sale,” says Barron, adding that they try to give faithful newsletter readers a head’s-up first, with word of mouth usually spreading from there. “We packaged yarns in clear bags of fives and tens, closed them

with duct tape, and placed signs that said DO NOT OPEN. We put color-coded dots on each bag to signify pricing—between \$10 and \$50—and put them in plastic bins on the floor at the back of the store.”

“Every day or two, we would refresh the ‘Vault’ inventory,” Gregson says, noting they held back some high-end yarns to sprinkle throughout the sales period to entice repeat shoppers. “It was absolutely a treasure hunt, like going through your attic.”

Each day, the bin area shrank, from 18 or so tubs to four. “After the sale ended, we donated the remainders,” Barron says. “Customers knew they had to buy right then because they wouldn’t get the chance to again.” The yarn-only sale was a rousing success, with 2,200 balls sold in 10 days. They hosted the sale in May, before their high-traffic season.

“We were concerned the Vault sale would cannibalize regular sales, but the reality was the opposite,” Gregson says. “People came in for the sale, but they also brought to the register hand-dyed silks and other items. It was particularly a hit with weavers, who need a lot of yarn.”

A game of chance

Another sales tactic Bortner suggests is taking advantage of the fact that “most customers are gamblers at heart.” Whether you tuck coupons inside balloons, fold coupons in a jar that customers draw from, or initiate some other gimmick at the register, make sure you circulate only one 50-percent-off coupon. A good rule of thumb: Have two at 40 percent, four at 30 percent, 10

at 20 percent, and the rest at 10 percent or 5 percent off. “Ring the purchase up first, and then open the coupon and apply it to the total,” Bortner adds. “Don’t let the customer add more items to his or her lucky 50 percent coupon or take things out of her basket when she learns the coupon is worth only 5 percent off.”

Rewards cards, kit-of-the-month clubs and guild discounts are all great options for enticing customers without marking a lot of product down, Bortner says. She notes that clubs are particularly helpful when it comes to placing large orders: Members discuss their great projects with non-members, who inevitably want to buy the same yarns and patterns.

Most importantly, Gregson says, be a savvy buyer from the start. “We don’t buy for us; we buy what sells,” she adds. “We try not to overlook the latest and greatest, but we’re realistic about the space we have for inventory.”

Barron agrees: “When we work with a new vendor, we start conservatively with the lines. We would rather grow with the sales volume, not start off with a big initial order.”

Get the vendor involved

Before you decide to discount inventory, Gregson and Barron advise reaching out to your vendor representative first. Think of your relationships with vendors as partnerships, and see if they have any useful suggestions for moving slow-to-sell product. After all, they don’t want to see their yarns in the clearance bin any more than you want to put them there.

“The vendor may send a trunk show or a new pattern to support a particular yarn,” says Gregson. “Sometimes a sample made up in a slow-moving color is all it takes to spark a run on a particular yarn.”

“If nothing else, you’ll discover which vendors are interested in partnering with you and which ones are merely selling colored string,” Barron concludes.

Donation over Discount

Breaking its rule of trying not to repeat sales tactics, one event that the Ball & Skein & More has done more than once is to donate 10 percent of its gross revenue over a specific weekend to a local women’s shelter. “People tell us, ‘I’m here today specifically because you are doing this,’” says Oz Barron. “We could just hold a 10-percent-off weekend sale, but we want to give back to our local community, which has given so much to us.”

know it’s coming, and they will wait for it.” While this concept likely applies most to a subset of your customers—the best shoppers will buy regardless—Bortner recommends hosting flash sales to entice all types of shoppers into your store. “Advertise the sale via Twitter, your Facebook page or an e-newsletter,” she suggests. It should be both short term and specific, such as “Yarn X has been discontinued, so we’re pulling it off our shelves and putting it in bags for sale.”

Kris Gregson and Oz Barron, husband-and-wife owners of Ball & Skein & More in Cambria, California, can attest to the success of flash sales. “We’ll occasionally do online-only ‘Mystery Bags’ that cost \$10, \$20 or \$50,” Barron explains. “We always announce the sale first in our e-newsletter to give readers first dibs. After that, we will promote it on Ravelry, Facebook and our website.”

Clearing out clearance

Ball & Skein & More has, like many yarn shops, “that bin in the corner” filled with marked-down

Heather Gooch is a journalist who specializes in the needlearts industry. She blogs about industry branding and marketing at PositiveYarn.com.



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Simply Socks Yarn Company



Can a yarn shop exist on sock yarn alone? Yes, according to Allison Van Zandt, owner of Simply Socks Yarn Company. The store, situated in a beautifully renovated 1940s-era post office in Fort Wayne, Indiana, celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, with no signs of a slowdown. The secret? Catering to a niche clientele and keeping that niche very, very well stocked and attended to.

A decade ago, Van Zandt was a knitter in search of a product: sock yarn, something in scarce supply at her LYS. "I couldn't find much," she explains. "And when I went online, there wasn't a site that sold a wide array. If I wanted four particular balls of yarn, I could end up paying shipping fees to four different places." That experience gave voice to the rallying cry of many a yarn entrepreneur: "I can do this better!" And she did, spending six months researching, planning and web developing for the business. The website went live in June 2005, offering a dozen or so lines. Today Simply Socks offers 40-plus (including a house brand), adding up to a staggering six tons of yarn. The focus is still superwash and fingering weight, with the occasional DK and worsted tossed in for good measure. "It's what my customers expect of me," Van Zandt says of the preponderance of sock yarns. "I don't hop on a trend or mimic what other businesses are doing. I know what works for my shop, and I continue to grow and expand in that mission."

For the first six years, Simply Socks was an online-only business operating first out of Van Zandt's spare bedroom and then, when the family moved, out of a finished barn on the new property. "Being a young mom, it was easier for me

to care for my family that way," she explains. When a building that she and her husband were smitten with—a 1940s post office in the lively East State Village district in downtown Fort Wayne—became available, Van Zandt decided she'd found the perfect spot for the expanding company. They gutted the building and restored it to its former glory (the renovation was part of a feature on store design in the October 2011 issue of *Yarn Market News*), ending up with 3,500 square feet of space for yarn and a studio where Van Zandt's fiber artists paint Poste Yarn, a custom-order collection.

Open in 2011, the space serves mainly as what Van Zandt calls a "pretty warehouse," one that's open to the public one day a week. "It gets gasps and wide eyes from knitters when they enter," Van Zandt says. The awe comes not just from the staggering amount of yarn but also because of the 14-foot ceilings and flood of natural light that pours in from the building's 20 windows. The aesthetics serve both a practical and pretty purpose: "It allows our knitters to better choose colors or compare them for a larger project, because they are in a space that doesn't need any artificial light," Van Zandt explains.

There are certainly plenty of colors to choose from. "If I carry a line, it's likely I carry every available color [in that line]," notes Van Zandt. "For instance, I don't just carry a couple dozen colors of Lorna's Laces Shepherd Sock; I offer more than 200." And the colors she notes online are the ones in stock. "I don't sell something on our website that isn't available to immediately ship."

Ensuring the thing her customers wanted most—popular solid colors—led Van Zandt to a second venture: Simply Socks branded yarn. Created six years ago, the line, tagged Simply Socks Yarn Solids, consists of 60 solid shades. "Large yarn companies sell out of white, black, red or gray and they might not reorder them from overseas for months," Van Zandt explains. "Heck, [one supplier] was out of black sock yarn recently for four months! My customers won't have that." The Simply Sock Yarn Solids brand was created to fill in those gaps, offering customers an always available alternative when the color they need is unavailable from another manufacturer. Two years later she launched the Poste Yarn line, custom dyeing to customers' requests. "Striped sock yarn? We do that. Confetti colors? Just give me a week. A special edition

color for a Christmas kit? No problem," Van Zandt says. "Having our own in-house dye studio keeps us fluid and relevant."

Van Zandt credits much of Simply Socks' success to its singular focus. "We don't stray too far from that," she says, "which allows us to do it really well." She also keeps the lines of communication open, using email, social media and the shop's blog to connect customers—mostly women ranging in age from 30 to 65—to the company. "I take every opportunity to share special photos and tidbits about the shop and life," Van Zandt explains. "I spend a lot of time sharing project ideas and interviews with our dyers." The goal is to help online customers feel as if Simply Socks is their "local shop from afar." Online there are knit-alongs and yarn clubs; in the store she hosts the occasional party and in-person knit-along. The store was a big contributor to Sock Summit. "I try to feed the passion that we all have for our craft," Van Zandt says. "In life, we all deserve a soft place to land. And for many of us, that soft place is knitting."

The yarn business has been a soft place for Van Zandt as well. "I can't think of anything I don't like about it," she says. "I love the people I work with—my staff, dyers and artisans, designers, delivery people. I'm surrounded by hard-working and dedicated people. I love seeing what independent dyers are coming up with, creating skeins in our own studio. I like that my job includes 20 different things each day: I switch from web design to bookkeeping to photography in the blink of an eye. Now if I can just find time to knit a few stitches, my day would be complete."

Simply Socks Yarn Company **QUICK GLANCE**
1315 E. State Blvd.
Fort Wayne, IN 46805
www.simplysockyarn.com
Years in business: 10
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SweetGeorgia Yarns

By MARYAM SIDDIQI

Visitors have to go a bit out of their way to find SweetGeorgia Yarns' studio in South Vancouver, where the company does all of its hand dyeing and runs a small retail shop. "We're in an industrial neighborhood," says Felicia Lo, the company's founder and creative director. "We're next to a cement-mixing place, we're close to a coffee-roasting place, there's somebody who imports and exports seafood, there's a whole-sale pie manufacturer. It's a bit bizarre." Even so, visitors drop by often. After all, Lo and her team make the sort of products that people go out of their way to find.

Lo learned to knit as a child, picking the craft up again as a hobby 10 years ago. She spent her days seeing to her graphic design and web-development business. In her free time she started dyeing her own yarn: a way to "explore color," she says. "Even though I got to be creative at work, a lot of the things I worked on didn't get realized until several months down the line. When I start dyeing, there was a feeling of immediacy."

Playing with color became addictive, and Lo soon had more yarn than she could use. She started blogging, naming the site SweetGeorgia for Georgia Street in Vancouver. Her original intention was to be a food/desserts blogger, but her posts were quickly overtaken by yarn.

"People reading the blog were asking if they could buy my yarn," she explains, "so I started thinking that maybe I should put it out there." Lo made her first sales in 2005 through Etsy, which at the time was just launching. "I posted three items on Etsy and they sold really, really quickly—within hours," she says. But the site's functionality was limited: "You could put only one thing in the cart and then check out. You couldn't combine things; you couldn't combine shipping," Lo says. Three months after opening her Etsy shop, she developed her own online store.

Lo got her first sales request from a yarn shop within six months of starting to hand-dye, from Amy Swenson, owner of the Calgary, Alberta, yarn shop Make One Yarn. Then Colorado's The Loopy Ewe called, and then there was a Canadian online shop. "It got to the point where I completely overwhelmed myself with wholesale

orders. I was not set up to do that," Lo admits.

For a year and a half, in 2007 and 2008, Lo took a step back from SweetGeorgia Yarns, which at the time was still just a side job to her full-time graphic-design business, and from work in general. "I took that time to travel and to look at what it was that I wanted to do. I had to decide which pieces I wanted to go forward and continue with," she explains. She returned from her travels refreshed and dedicated to her hand-dyeing yarn business.

"I worked on slowly rebuilding everything, figuring out the product line from the bottom up, figuring out what I could produce in X amount of time. And I didn't fling open the doors and expect wholesale orders—we slowly added people, slowly added new stores and asked for help," Lo says.

That the company is celebrating its tenth anniversary in September is indication that the slow-and-steady rebuild worked well indeed. "It's always been a good reminder to slow down and look at what we're doing," she explains. "Ultimately we want to make sure that what we're sending out is absolutely the very best it can be and that we're delivering when we tell people

we're going to deliver."

While the majority of SweetGeorgia Yarns' customers are based in North America (60 percent from the U.S., 30 percent from

Canada), thanks to a strong online presence the company has fans across the globe. They're drawn to high-quality fibers, which Lo and her team source from a half-dozen mills around the world. "We're trying to spread out where we get our yarns from because we're always worried about production issues and getting held up by any one mill," Lo says. Merino, for instance, comes from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and South America. The Blue-Faced Leicester is spun in the United Kingdom, with other yarns spun in the U.S. and Canada.

Known for its vibrant, saturated colors, SweetGeorgia Yarns develops product lines twice a



Address: 11-408 East Kent Ave. S.,
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(604) 569-6811
www.sweetgeorgiayarns.com

Employees: 9

Fun Fact: SweetGeorgia Yarns happily takes on custom orders. One of Lo's most memorable jobs was a request from a bride-to-be: "[She] sent me the cover of a wedding magazine and wanted her color theme to be built around the bouquet on the cover. I managed to dye a whole batch of our cashmere/silk lace yarn, and I did it all very intuitively, just painting it, and got it to match the cover pretty much dead-on." The yarn was used for a Shetland tea shawl, which the bride wore as her wedding veil on her walk down the aisle.



year, for spring/summer and fall/winter. Lo gets her inspiration from her environment. "We're surrounded by a lot of natural beauty, so that definitely helps to inform us," Lo says. "There's also the fact that it rains quite a lot in Vancouver, so for half the year it can be quite gray here. I need the vivid color because it actually lifts my mood. It changes your spirit." And she also looks to parallel industries, including wedding and event planning and furniture design—as well as beach and surfer culture—to see how they are using textures, materials, colors and fabrics in their work.

To commemorate the company's tenth year, SweetGeorgia is having even more fun with color. Along with a new sock yarn called Glitterati, which has silver sparkles in it—"It's fun!" Lo says with a laugh—the company is launching mini skein kits called "Party of Five."

"There are five different colors in each of these kits; the five colors are from colorways we do now. They're semisolids, but when you see them all together, they represent colorways that we did when we started the company," Lo says. "It's kind of an homage to what we did at the very beginning." The kits, available online and at retailers, will be produced in four base yarns including Tough Love Sock, SweetGeorgia's most popular yarn.



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Tangled Threads

UNRAVELING THE INTERCONNECTED KNITTING TRENDS OF THE PAST 10 YEARS

BY BRISTOL IVY

If I had to pick a phrase to describe the past decade in the knitting world, it would be “tumultuous connectivity.” As knitters, yarn store owners, yarn producers and designers, we have witnessed massive ups and downs. The year 2005 saw the very peak of knitting’s brave new world: Debbie Stoller’s seminal *Stitch ‘n Bitch* had been published the previous year, novelty yarns were all the rage, hundreds of news articles the world over declared knitting the “new yoga,” and the industry boomed as thousands of new knitters flocked to yarn store shelves, eager to try or relearn knitting for themselves. But just a few years later, we found ourselves teetering on the brink of worldwide economic recession—an event that impacted the knitting industry just as profoundly as it did the rest of the world, when shops and knitters alike tried to figure out how knitting fit into their new lives.

AT the same time, a whole new world was opening to knitters online—the game-changing behemoths of Etsy and Ravelry forged previously unheard-of bonds between knitters and yarn producers across the globe. Knit-blogging flourished, creating a new class of celebrity in the knitting world. Designers went independent, selling patterns through their own websites and Ravelry, starting their own magazines and even self-publishing their own books. Startups came and went. Stores opened and closed. But through it all, several major trends and events shaped the industry into what we now know as the world of modern knitting.

To get a better idea of these trends and events, let’s take a look at the available data. I collected information from various sources from the past decade: reports from the National NeedleArts Association, Ravelry publication figures and yarn-producer statistics, magazine pattern statistics, and interviews with independent yarn dyers and several yarn-shop owners and employees from around the country. It’s still hard to get concrete data on the current state of the yarn side of the industry, since so many participants now sell directly to consumers and therefore don’t necessarily participate in TNNA wholesaler surveys. However, we can extrapolate somewhat from a combination of the yarn usage of publications and Ravelry yarn-producer statistics. From this raw data, I was able to find a clear picture of the ups, downs and trends of the past 10 years.

Knitting’s New Public Face

One of the biggest developments we can see is the rise of knitting as a public activity, both in the in-person, out-of-the-home sense and in the online, social media sense of the word. With the Internet, knitters became conscious of the idea of the collective “we,” and knitting quickly became about community and consumption, both online and off. We formed new knitting groups, we proudly knit in public (Worldwide Knit in Public Day debuted in 2005), we gleefully yarn-bombed anything that stood still, we planned vacations around yarn-centric events and we shop-hopped the entire way there. We also shared our projects, our purchases and our queues online, using blogs, then Flickr, then Ravelry and now Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and Tumblr to connect. It was a whole new world—we reached across the planet and found needles, yarn and

friends on the other side, just waiting for us.

This connectivity of the knitting community as a whole gave rise to the first crowd-sourced and global knitting trends. For the first time, we were influenced by more than our own personal preferences, ideas shown in magazines and what we saw on the shelves of our LYSes. Now, we could see exactly what others were knitting and what they were knitting with, and we wanted to join them. Indeed, the 2010 TNNA Consumer Report survey results stated that the top two sources of information on new products were websites/blogs and Ravelry. As a global, interconnected community, we began to recognize brand names, designer names and project names in new ways, each one cementing our connection to our new network. As with the art of knitting itself, many strands of influence came together to make up the whole.

Socks, Spending and the Rise of the Indie Dyer

There's a chicken-or-egg discussion surrounding the first real trend in the Internet-savvy knitting world: fingering-weight socks. Many dyers agreed that it's hard to say what the catalyst for this was; the yarn and project type seemed to grow concurrently in popularity, with no real moment of revelation for either. Brooke Sinnes, the natural dyer behind Sincere Sheep, admits, "I'm not sure if the indie-dyer explosion or the sock-knitting explosion came first or if they grew up and out of each other."

However, together they certainly made an impact: From 2004 to 2006, the number of available sock patterns nearly doubled (from 266 to 506), and then, with the advent of Ravelry in 2007, that figure more than quadrupled (506 to 2,106). While it's true that the readily available pattern database (and, later, pattern marketplace) on Ravelry made it easy to publish and aggregate patterns—leading to an overall increase in patterns in all garment categories—the typical average rise from 2006 to 2007 was approximately half that of socks, at 240 percent. Socks clearly had a life of their own. The use of fingering-weight yarn in published patterns also rose disproportionately to other types of yarn from 2006 to 2007, at a rate of 305 percent as opposed to an average of 212 percent in all other yarn categories. It's hard to tell, therefore, which came first. We know that socks were revolutionized by hand-dyers, whose eye for color combinations elevated simple stockinette to another plane. But were these hand-dyed yarns the result of a demand based on an already existing sock-knitting market, or did the sock-knitting market emerge as a result of these yarns?

The answer, of course, is a little of both, and a bit more of several other factors besides. Above any other factor, however, and more than almost any other project, socks lent themselves to this new idea of public knitting. In terms of public consumption, when people traveled to yarn stores as

tourist destinations, their visits were often marked with souvenir purchases. In the interest of both physical space and economy, fingering-weight sock yarn was often the best return on investment; a single skein had relatively high yardage, could complete an entire project, and offered many hours of knitting pleasure for relatively little cost. With creation, when people knit in public, either in groups or alone, socks were a highly portable project. In her 2009 book *The Secret Life of a Knitter*, the Yarn Harlot championed their virtues: "A sock, no matter how close to completion, never becomes unwieldy or enormous or spills off your lap onto the floor of the waiting room or muddy bottom of the bus."

With the rise of the newly public knitter and the increase in sock knitters came, naturally, more sock patterns. From 2005 to the beginning of 2007—the height of the sock-knitting craze—socks held between 30 and 35 percent of the top 20 patterns on Ravelry, while other categories garnered on average a mere 8.5 percent. In addition, this trend also brought with it the rise of

// WITH THE INTERNET, KNITTERS BECAME CONSCIOUS OF THE IDEA OF THE COLLECTIVE 'WE,' AND KNITTING QUICKLY BECAME ABOUT COMMUNITY AND CONSUMPTION, BOTH ONLINE AND OFF.

// more fingering-weight yarn, which held a similar average as socks in the top 20. It also brought with it a new perception of readily available yarns as appropriate for socks.

Taiu Landra of Koigu Wool Designs, whose Premium Painter's Palette Merino (PPPM) fingering-weight yarn had already been on the market as a garment yarn for almost a decade, found that there was a sudden shift from knitters referring to it as "fingering weight" to calling it "sock yarn." These major innovators of hand-dyed fingering-weight yarn mostly continued with the

traditional wholesale distribution paradigm.

However, with the advent of Etsy in 2005, small-batch hand-dyers no longer had to rely on selling their yarn through existing channels or on disparate and individual websites. The online handmade marketplace allowed buyers to search for blanket terms such as "yarn," "hand-dyed yarn" or "sock yarn" and aggregated independent producers into one approachable screen. Etsy allowed dyers to sell directly to the consumer, building followings, creating niches in the market and further strengthening the trend of brand-name recognition and connectivity in the modern knitting world. Though exact figures are difficult to estimate, it's safe to say that the sock-knitting trend had a strong correlation with both of these businesses starting in the first place and in their choice of yarn weights and bases to carry in their shops. "Fingering-weight yarn was the backbone of the explosion of indie dyers. It coordinated nicely with the explosion in interest in knitting socks," says Sinnes. "I think that fingering weight continues to be popular because one 100g/4oz skein can be used for a variety of projects, allows you to try out new yarns and dyers, and doesn't break the bank. It is the gateway drug to becoming an all-out indie-dyer junkie."

The Recession, Homepreneurs and Knitting the Classics

While the sock trend was a relatively even pairing of yarn and garment type, with both yarn and

(continued on page 50)



patterns on the increase, the next trend saw a divergence between the two. When the recession hit in 2007, many fiber artists turned to their hobbies to supplement or replace lost income, becoming what economists term “homepreneurs.” Etsy and Ravelry made this easy, and fingering-weight hand-dyed yarn continued to flourish. After an initial burst of 513 yarn companies listed on Ravelry in 2007, the years 2008 and 2009 each saw 374 and 365 new yarn brands list their yarns on the website, more than have been added any year since. However, though these brands and yarns steadily joined the market (they currently represent 24 percent of the yarns listed on Ravelry, higher than any other category), knitters, perhaps more cautious and wary of their spending, took a step back and assessed what they already had in their stashes. There they focused on the workhorse weights: worsted and, to a lesser extent, DK and Aran. Though worsted-weight yarns account for only 11 percent of the yarns listed on Ravelry, they accounted for 55 percent of the patterns in the top 20 in 2008; all other weights had only 5–10 percent.

Though the consumptive aspect of knitting’s public identity faded as knitters turned to existing stash and spent less money at yarn stores, its creative and community identity flourished, with knitting groups and yarn and fiber events remaining strong. With that in mind, portable projects utilizing few skeins remained in the forefront. With the shift to worsted-weight yarn, knitters turned to the next trend in portable public knitting: hats.

In 2008 and 2009, during the height of the recession, there was only a relatively slight increase (129 percent) in the number of hat patterns available, compared with the 416 percent jump in sock patterns at the height of their popularity. Despite this, hats held 35 percent of the top-20 most popular patterns for 2008 and 2009, and, according to the 2010 TNNA Consumer Report, hats were the most popular item that knitters had made in the previous year. Many news stories at this time discussed how the recession had brought about a return to more traditional skills and crafts, and it’s possible that worsted-weight hats, a common part of the knitter’s lexicon for generations previous, was knitting’s version of this return to history and tradition. If socks, especially those in brightly colored, independently sourced hand-dyed yarn, were the symbol of knitting’s new world, worsted-weight hats were a sign of its return to its roots.

Both hats and worsted-weight yarn continue to hold major parts of the Ravelry market to this day: The former boasts an average of 15 percent of the patterns published on Ravelry since the recession, and the latter accounts for 23 percent of all published patterns in the same time period—both higher than any other garment or yarn type. Despite this, however, they haven’t had the same peak that they saw during the recession. Instead, as the economy began to find its footing, knitters’ attention shifted to new projects and revisited some previous trends.

Shawls, KALs and the Desire to Learn

Knitters the world over breathed a sigh of relief as global finances began to stabilize in mid to late 2009. Though budgets remained tight, all the hand-dyed fingering-weight yarn that knitters had put aside during the recession started to regain its appeal. For the first time, in fall 2012, semisolid hand-dyed yarns overtook solid yarns in the patterns published in *Interweave Knits*. But the sock trend, previously coupled with the hand-dyed yarn trend, had reached saturation point; from 2008–2014, socks held on average only 12 percent of the top 20 patterns each year on Ravelry. With single skeins of fingering-weight yarn in their stashes and on the market, knitters focused on another trend: shawls.

It’s possible that, had the recession not occurred, shawls would have been the direct and smooth transition from socks. In 2007, fingering-weight shawl patterns had a telltale jump above the statistical average, with 320 percent growth from the previous year. This growth pattern was put on hold for a few years, though, with 2008 and 2009’s growth averaging a similar amount to other categories. In 2010, however, another boost occurred, with fingering-weight shawls showing 212 percent growth, higher than the 139 percent in all other categories. Two major factors seem to have governed the rise of shawls: first, the increase in technique-based education, and second, the rise of Mystery Knit-Alongs (MKALs).

The reason that these factors resonated most in the rise of shawls is that these garments are the perfect blank canvas. According to the 2010 TNNA Consumer Report, 36 percent of knitters were spending on average \$226 a year on classes, and shawls were the perfect project with which to test their skills. Their shapes are created by an easily repeatable and memorizable series of increases or decreases, which leaves the knitter free to focus on practicing techniques such as lace, intarsia or short rows within those shapes. And unlike the sock and hat trends that came before them, these didn’t have to

adhere to specific measurements, which gave knitters the opportunity to concentrate further on their new skills without worrying about precise gauge or fit. This catered to designers including Stephen West and Veera Välimäki, who began to push technical boundaries, creating shawl shapes that were more free-form and sculptural than would normally be seen in a traditional garment.

This trend toward education and exploration of new techniques and shaping was further solidified with the launch of both *Craftsy* and *Creativebug* in 2011, online services that host forums, marketplaces and classes in myriad techniques and projects—several of which focus on shawls, shaping techniques and projects that utilize both in combination. In addition, this era heralded the rise of Mystery Knit-Along shawls, projects that are published as a series of “clues,” or a set of in-

structions for a portion of the shawl, on a weekly or biweekly basis, with scant information besides yarn choice and rough yardage estimates given about the finished piece. In addition, very few photos are included until the final reveal.

Kristen Kapur, designer of annual mystery shawls since 2012, says, “One thing I hear time and time again—particularly with the shawls—is that because the patterns are given out in small, manageable chunks, knitters feel much less intimidated.” Knitters must rely on their own skills and the skills of their new community regarding technique, construction, proportion and the final product’s finished shape. As a result, MKALs promote both community building and the development of knitters’ skill sets. Kapur marvels that “the more experienced participants offer help and tips and respond to questions so quickly that often answers are posted before I read the question. I’ve even picked up a few tricks along the way from participants in my MKALs.”

Mystery shawls saw major growth about a year after both jumps in fingering-weight shawls, gaining 275 percent from 2007 to 2008 and 256 percent from 2010 to 2011. While they still hold a relatively small percentage of the total shawls published on Ravelry—only about 2 percent—they are responsible for between 5 and 25 percent of the top-20 most popular patterns in the past three years. This trend also plays on the popularity of Knit-Alongs, which promote a shared sense of adventure and camaraderie as knitters race to finish the next clue, help each other decipher instructions and new techniques, and finally show off their finished projects. As the knitting community continues to grow, with Ravelry seeing its five millionth member in early 2015,

IF SOCKS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN BRIGHTLY COLORED, INDEPENDENTLY SOURCED HAND-DYED YARN, WERE THE SYMBOL OF KNITTING’S NEW WORLD, WORSTED-WEIGHT HATS WERE A SIGN OF ITS RETURN TO ITS ROOTS.

these Knit-Alongs are a way for knitters to find a niche and communal identity for themselves in the continually expanding world of the online public.

Kapur found this to be true in her own knit-alongs: "Finding smaller communities within the larger Ravelry/online world is definitely a part of it. We have local yarn stores participate with their customers, and friends from across the world meet up in the group to knit together. For last summer's mystery shawl, a group of Dutch knitters started their own thread in which they chatted about the shawl. I couldn't understand a word they said, but it was clear that they were having a great time connecting through the KAL. That thread stayed active until well after the mystery had ended."

Where Are Things Going Next?

Though shawls are continuing strong, with 45 percent of the top-20 patterns from 2014, the market is beginning to saturate. We don't have a specific garment type yet rising to take their place; cowls have had a meteoric rise in published patterns over the past decade (2008 to 2010 saw an average growth rate of 241 percent) but haven't yet seen a peak in yearly popularity. Likewise, though sweaters have been a mainstay in the knitting world for many decades and are often the items with the most social clout in public (both on- and offline), the number of sweater patterns published has actually fallen over the past few years, and they've averaged just 9 percent of the top 20 most popular patterns over the past five years. We may get a few more years out of the shawl trend, but as dyer Lorajean Kelley of Knitted Wit says, "It's gotten a little muddled as people know their preferences a little more." We may indeed be seeing a general lack of trend as knitters find their niche and focus on what they truly love.

In the yarn sector of the industry, the hand-dyed-yarn market remains strong. However, we are seeing a wholly different kind of yarn rise: breed-specific, domestically produced wool yarns. Though several companies have produced yarns with these specifications for years, this current trend's seeds were planted during the recession as many industries during that time saw a return to domestic production. Across the economy, producers saw a way to revitalize latent industries within the United States, creating potential income and job growth within those sectors while promoting and maintaining long-held traditions of craft and artistry. The time was ripe for knitters to do the same, and companies like Quince & Co. and Brooklyn Tweed, captained by already notable members of the knitting elite, led the way. Knitters have responded avidly to these yarns, with yarn store owners across the country reporting many requests from both locals and tourists alike for locally sourced or domestically produced yarns.

Knitters now have a broader understanding of yarn's potential and possibilities, as shop owners, bloggers and designers work to educate their audience on the nuances of breeds, spinning methods and yarn production history in this country. Jaime Jennings, co-owner of Fancy Tiger Crafts in Denver, Colorado, says, "I love to use hardy, breed-specific wools. My tastes have changed a lot, and with that, our customers'. We now sell a ton of beautiful small-milled, breed-specific wools that we never could have moved before, and I think it's because we have educated our customers as we ourselves have been educated. We just launched our webstore, and it's these yarns that are our bestsellers." Only time will tell if this education will result in a passing trend or in a shift in the entire yarn-production paradigm.

Knitting has had an interesting ride through the past 10 years. These years have brought us major upheavals in the way knitters purchase yarn, interact with each other and understand their community and its trends. But throughout all of that, from every corner of the globe, knitting grew as an artform, developing new ideas, holding tight to the idea of community and creating some of the most beautiful work any of us have ever seen.

Bristol Ivy is a knitwear designer and statistical analyst in Portland, Maine. She writes monthly posts about the state of the yarn industry on her blog, blackbirdturning.blogspot.com.

NEW & KNITTABLE

Ancient Arts Fibre Crafts

Our new 80% SW merino/ 20% nylon **8-ply Cable Heavy Fingering/Sport** yarn is round, plump, durable and soft. A very knittable yarn, it flows off your needles and produces beautiful, even stitches. This versatile yarn looks great in a variety of gauges and is perfect for cables and other techniques that need good stitch definition. ancientartsfibre.com



Briggs & Little

Briggs & Little's newest yarn is a softspun single-ply called **Light 'n' Fancy**. In white plus five hand-colored shades by Fleece Artist, it is an ideal weight for light and lacy patterns requiring softness. Available through our U.S. distributor, Up North Fiber Art Supply. briggsandlittle.com



Classic Elite Yarns

Are you taking advantage of CEY's monthly patterns? Monthly pattern releases mean customers will keep coming back to your shop. In June, our collectible book is **Forecast 1506**, featuring garments that are wearable from summer into fall, like this pretty cardigan, Ozone, knit in Classic Silk. classiceleyarns.com

An illustration by Lisa Henderling depicting four women engaged in cleaning activities. One woman is standing and reaching up to a shelf, another is kneeling and scrubbing the floor, and a third is holding a large green bucket filled with colorful yarn. The fourth woman is partially visible on the right. The background features abstract shapes and patterns, including a large orange circle and a green textured area. The title 'Spring Cleaning' is prominently displayed in the upper left.

Spring Cleaning

DUSTY SHELVES
WON'T SELL YARN.
CHANNEL YOUR INNER MARTHA
AND GIVE YOUR SHOP
A TOP-TO-BOTTOM
SCRUBBING.

BY DARYL BROWER

Step 1 Time It Right

A full-on spring cleaning is a big undertaking, one that takes at least a day or more, so it can be tricky deciding just when to get it done. Janet Avila, who owns String Theory in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, says scheduling her annual carpet steam-cleaning is a conundrum. "Should I get it cleaned before winter so the shop looks best for our busiest season? No, because people will track in slush and salt the very next day. Should I clean carpets in the spring to get rid of the salt from the winter? No, because people will track in mud the very next day. Should I clean carpets in the summer? Probably, but traffic is slow and it's an extra expense. Should I get it done in the fall? No, because people will track in leaves and spill drinks during our events and it will be dirty again the very next day. See my dilemma?" she jokes.

At The Web•sters in Ashland, Oregon, owner Dona Zimmerman has determined that winter is the best time to give her shop its major cleaning. "February and March are our slowest sales times and therefore the perfect time to go through everything," she says. Whichever season you choose to roll up your sleeves and get scrubbing, make sure you've allotted enough time for the job. Decide whether you'll tackle it on your shop's day off (if it has one), close for the occasion or break it into chunks after closing time.

Step 2 Assess the Situation

We tend to blind ourselves to the faults of the familiar, seeing the store as we think it should look rather than how it actually does look. So take off those rose-colored glasses and look objectively at the state of your shop, seeing it as a brand-new customer would. Better yet, enlist a friend who hasn't been in for some time to give you a brutally honest assessment of what needs sprucing up. Are the walls looking sad and scuffed? Could the carpet use a good cleaning?

A change in perspective is also in order, because most of us focus on things that are at eye level, ignoring what's above or below. Climb up on a step stool to get a look at what taller cus-

tomers see when they step into your shop. Is dust collecting on light fixtures or the tops of shelving and display units? Has the paint chipped on the wall above your tallest cabinets? Now get down on your hands and knees (your floor is clean, right?) and look at lower-level shelves. Are the baseboards scuffed or chipped? Are there T-pins embedded in the carpet? Price stickers or labels stuck to floor tiles? Grab a notepad and write down all the tasks that need doing, from big to small.

Step 3 Decide Who'll Do the Heavy Lifting

Once you have an idea of what actually needs doing, make a decision about who's going to do it. Outsourcing the job to a cleaning service has

Spring arrives with a bright new palette of yarn colors, pretty pattern books and great ideas to get customers stitching. It also tends to be a slower sales season for many, offering the perfect opportunity to go beyond daily dusting and vacuuming. Here's our down-and-dirty guide to getting your store in sparkling shape.

obvious benefits: Someone else will be doing the dirty work, and those coming to clean will know the best and fastest ways to get the job done. Plus, they'll have all the necessary tools and cleaning supplies on hand. The downside? Hiring professionals can be costly. However, though doing the job on your own may *seem* like the cheaper option, keep in mind that the do-it-yourself route will involve the purchase of myriad cleaning supplies, the rental or purchase of various equipment (carpet steamer, floor buffer, etc.) and extra payroll hours (and possibly overtime pay) for the staff lending a hand.

Remember there's no need to go all-or-nothing here. You can leave a number of the jobs to the pros and handle the rest with the help of staff or willing friends and relatives. Divide the store into sections, break your crew into teams and have at it. Why not make it a party? Put on a little music and set up a casual food-and-drink buffet for your helpers. It'll help make all that hard work a little easier to bear.

Ready, Set, Clean

Here's how to tackle the most pressing jobs:

YARN BINS, BASKETS, SHELVING

Daily dusting keeps exposed surfaces clean, but you can bet that there's loads of lint hiding underneath all those skeins, so pull out all the yarn and give the fixtures a good cleaning. Use plastic bins or cardboard boxes to keep inventory in order as you empty the shelves. As you pull out yarns, assess the current state of each skein. Make sure that colors haven't faded and that ball bands and tags are secure and in good shape. Designate one of your bins or cardboard boxes for yarns that shouldn't make their way back to the shelves—you can sell these off in a clearance later. Once the shelves or cubbies have been emptied, wipe them down with a microfiber cloth to remove lint and other debris,

then grab a sponge and a bucket of warm soapy water and give them a good washing. Wipe dry and then restock with yarn. If you've been thinking about rearranging by color, fiber or brand, now is time to do it.

FLOORING

No matter how well heeled your customers, chances are they're tracking in quite a bit of dirt. A daily sweeping and/or vacuuming and

the occasional damp mopping will keep things tidy, but at some point you really need to do a full-on scrubbing. Here's how.

Carpet

Steam cleaning is the way to go. Hire a pro or rent a machine (most supermarkets and big box stores offer this service). Either way, you'll need to move fixtures and plan it right so the carpet has time to dry before you reopen for business. Move fixtures and furniture out of the way (giving them a good dusting in the process) and do a good vacuuming. Then fire up the steamer, following the manufacturer's instructions. Go easy on the cleaning solution—too much soap leaves residue, which will attract dirt later. Also take care not to oversaturate the area you're cleaning; the carpet should be damp, not drenched. Let the carpet dry thoroughly before you bring back the furniture. Allow about eight hours for drying time; opening windows and running box fans will help speed the process.

(continued on page 54)

Spring Cleaning

(continued from page 53)

Wood

As with carpet, start with a good vacuuming, then run a microfiber dust mop (preferably one with a fringed edge) over the baseboards (don't lift up, since this can trap large debris under the mop and scratch the floor). Next, run the mop up and down the length of the room in rows, just as if you were mowing the lawn (again, don't lift up). Vacuum the baseboards again, using the hose attachment. Working in small areas and using a spray bottle, lightly mist the floor with water or a cleaner specially formulated for wood flooring. Use a clean microfiber pad to mop the wet area, following the wood grain.

Vinyl or linoleum

A scrub brush and a sponge mop are the key tools here. Sweep and vacuum first, of course, then fill up a few buckets with warm water and cleaning solution and start scrubbing to loosen dirt and debris. Grab a clean bucket of warm water and use the sponge mop to wipe up dirt and soapsuds.

LIGHTING

Burned-out bulbs should be replaced immediately and fixtures dusted daily (or at least weekly), but to really ensure that you're showing off your store in the best light, you need to take things a step further. Remove the bulbs, and then remove the light covers. Line the sink or a large basin with a dish-towel and place the glass in the basin, open-end up. Fill the sink with warm water and a squirt or two of dish soap and let the glass pieces soak. Wipe them with a sponge, then let dry before replacing. While you're at it, take a look at the ceiling itself. Check for stained or cracked tiles, chipped paint or water damage. Now is also a good time to clean around heating and air-conditioning ducts, which tend to be big dust collectors.

SAMPLE GARMENTS

Whether it's a sweater or socks, your store samples should be clean and in good shape. Start by setting out bins labeled Repair, Clean and Discard. Take all the pieces down and check for loose buttons, snagged yarns or pulled stitches (these go in the repair bin), then decide which will return to the sales floor (put these in the wash bin) and which have outlived their welcome (these can be returned to the sample knitter, sold off or given to customers or otherwise repurposed). Dust and polish the mannequins, head forms and dowels that are displaying them, checking to see that all are in good shape—

no faded fabrics, tears, chips or other signs of wear. This is a chance to rearrange and revamp your displays. Bring in new items to replace those that were removed and move things around to create a new look for the store.

PEGBOARD, SLAT WALLS, SHELVING

Take items off of peg walls and out of containers and give those holders a good dusting and cleaning. "The key words here are 'move it,'" says Dona Zimmerman. "We start at the front of the store and clean every book, needle, bin and basket." Check that all packages are in good shape (no faded cards, torn packaging, etc.). Wash down pegboard or slat walls with warm soapy water and a damp sponge, then wipe dry with a clean cloth.

CASH WRAP AND COMMON AREAS

Clutter can really accumulate here, so start by cleaning out any drawers and shelves behind the register. Dump unneeded papers, put bags and tissue paper in order, and organize extra register tape and other supplies. Also take a look at any signage at the register or elsewhere in the store. Does it need updating? If signs are looking ragged or faded, toss them and have new ones printed. Don't forget about employees-only areas like your kitchen or breakroom, office and stockroom.

WINDOWS

Sparkling windows are essential for both curb appeal and an influx of sunlight into the store. This is a job best left to the pros, especially if your space has large plate-glass windows. Zimmerman has her windows done monthly; Avila opts to have someone come every two weeks. Check with your neighbors; the service may give you a discount if all of the shops are done together.

OUTSIDE APPEARANCES

What's outside your store needs attending to as well. Wash awnings, make sure signs are in shape (retouch or redo them if they're not), paint if it's needed and take a look at your doorplates and handles. Replace planters and outdoor furniture if they seem a little worse for wear after the long winter and get yourself a new doormat. The goal is to make sure everything inside and out looks clean and fresh. "It doesn't happen in a day," says Zimmerman, who had just finished her big cleanup as this issue went to press, "but it all gets done, and the results make us and our customers happy."



NEW & KNITTABLE

Eucalan

Eucalan's **Jennifer Edgar** and designer **Kristin Omdahl** present a 12-day travel experience featuring the capitals of Germany and France, focusing on the artisan crafts, culture and cuisine that are woven through the fabric of both nations, from wool and wine to yarn, museums and monuments. (800) 561-9731; info@eucalan.com; pauwelstravel.com/tours



Knit One, Crochet Too

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Love exotic woods? Our limited-edition **Nirvana Twister** tabletop swift is now available in rosewood! Light and portable, the Twister can be disassembled easily for quick storage or packed for travel. To find out more, visit NirvanaNeedleArts.com.



KnowKnits

The original **GoKnit™ Pouch**, the best knitting bag on the market—lightweight, machine-washable, water-resistant, protector of yarns, and oh so many color choices! Stop by booth #1306 at TNNA Columbus to see all the new and exciting products we have to offer your customers. knowknits.com



Zealana

Zealana is proud to introduce **Cozi**, spun for socks but wonderful for all sorts of fingering-weight projects. Thoughtfully engineered to withstand wear, this blend of merino, possum down and baby alpaca offers soft warmth, while a small bit of elastic nylon adds memory and resilience. zealana.com



Mango Moon

Dale Garn's newest cotton, **Terne**, is perfect for spring and summer projects like those featured in the newly released **Book 312**. All of the wonderful new Dale Garn pattern books are now being translated into English, so North American knitters don't have to miss a single thing. Dale Garn is distributed in the U.S. and Canada by Mango Moon. Learn more at DaleGarnNorthAmerica.com or by calling (855) 966-3253.



Living the Dream

How to succeed in the yarn industry by really, really trying.

BY LESLIE PETROVSKI

Iga Buraya-Kefelian learned to knit and sew as a matter of necessity while growing up in Soviet-era Belarus, earning pocket money as a teenager tracing patterns while dreaming desultorily of a career in fashion design.

As the originator of the knitwear brand Olga-jazzy, she also acquired that seemingly magical

skill certain knitters have to take a design idea, apply some math and bring it to life on the needles. But it wouldn't be until she was living in Italy with her husband, who was in the U.S. Navy, that Buraya-Kefelian discovered there was more out there than the scratchy Belorussian yarns she remembered from home.

"I found a yarn store and discovered this whole new universe," she says. "I began to research all these yarns and patterns—it was mind-blowing. I started coming up with my own ideas again."

Today, Buraya-Kefelian is among a new breed of knitwear designers and yarnpreneurs who are, in fact, living the dream as independent professionals in the craft/yarn industry. Enabled by technology and emboldened by the DIY movement, these women and men are building brands and careers through their love of the fiber arts.

The Crafting Comeback

"After September 11, they were cleaning me out," says dyer Lisa Souza of her eponymous hand-dyed yarn and the cocooning phenomenon that took hold post-9/11. Prior to the tragedy, Souza was selling yarn as an ancillary offering to the hand-dyed finished sweaters she knit by machine and sold at juried craft fairs. But as hand-crafting gained popularity in the aftermath of the attacks, Souza saw an opportunity to free herself from what she had come to see as "soul-numbing" production work. So she sold her knitting

machines ("so I wouldn't be tempted," she says) and in 2002 registered for her first Stitches event.

"Things cycle around every so many years," explains Souza, a full-time fiber artist since the 1980s. "I've been doing this a long time, and I've seen it happen again and again. And the Internet has accelerated the learning curve for everyone."

Technology, indeed, has made it possible for all manner of entrepreneur, from health coaches to hand spinners, to make respectable livings from their basements and studios. In the craft/yarn industry, social media—especially Ravelry, with its global reach and reasonably priced ads—has made it possible for aspiring designers, dyers and spinners to access worldwide audiences without having to make outrageous investments of capital.

For Souza, increased interest in the Internet and the rise of knit blogging in the 2000s cata-

pulted her business from being a mostly West Coast venture to one with international reach. After Wendy Johnson, who writes the popular knitting blog Wendy Knits, showcased a few of Souza's skeins on her website, business exploded. That day Souza wrote orders from 7 A.M. to 5 P.M. "And they just kept coming in," she says. "That turned everything around."

Souza now offers a dazzling array of hand-dyed yarns, including her popular Sock! Merino; an 8-ply cashmere yarn called Lhasa; a BFL Sport and Worsted; and a sport-weight called Hardtwist Merino, which she sells online, in her retail studio, and at events such as Stitches, Vogue Knitting LIVE and the New York Sheep and Wool Festival. Two years ago, she purchased the wholesale company that supplied her with exotic fibers and rebranded it Weaver Creek Fibers, rounding out her retail business with a wholesale brand that sells undyed combed Chinese white cashmere, yak and baby camel top and mulberry silk sliver, among others. "That I get to do this for a living?" she says. "It's quite remarkable."

Following the Love

People come to the craft/yarn industry from countless walks of life. While many, like Souza, have art school backgrounds, others find their way through a love of knitting, fiber or color. Tanis Williams, owner and dyer behind String Theory Hand Dyed Yarn, was a career labor-and-delivery nurse who began dyeing yarn with a coworker for fun. It turned out they had an affinity for transforming base yarn into tonal and subtly variegated skeins. "We seemed to be very good at it," she says. "We were making this really beautiful product."

Their suspicions were confirmed when they approached a nearby yarn shop owner, who ended up buying all their stock. Balancing their work at the hospital, the partners opened a yarn store, stocking it with String Theory products as well as commercial yarns. About a year in, they saw that the commercial yarns had barely budged but that their yarns were selling briskly. When

.....
"I started small when I first began, so I wouldn't have to go into debt. Then I had to go into debt, because it takes money to make money. I started small and grew the business and then grew it again and again. People think when they get started that they are going to be Lorna's Laces, but Lorna started really small too and was able to build a brand."
.....

—Lisa Souza, Lisa Souza Knitwear and Dyeworks





"Be diligent. Constantly strive for perfection. Never be sure of your knowledge. Always try to learn more. Always stay hungry so that you continue to learn things that might help you to perfect a design, whether it's pattern making or construction. Always learn different aspects of the job that can make things better."

—Olga Buraya-Kefelian, independent knitwear designer and designer of Olgajazzy patterns

they both received layoff notices, they decided to go pro, ramping up the business, using the yarn store as a showcase and retail venue for String Theory while also launching a website and whole-sale initiative.

Last year, they closed the yarn shop—the most expensive part of their enterprise—and Williams bought out her partner. She's now running String Theory from her home in Blue Hill, Maine, immersed in the color she loves so much. "I've always been drawn to color," she says. "My kitchen walls are orange, and I grow incredible flower gardens because I like color. I found it came naturally. It was almost magical. I don't paint or draw, but I can put colors together."

Heroes' Journey

However, following one's bliss into the yarniverse is not an easy path. Starting an independent yarn business involves wearing many knit hats, and not all of those hats fit well. Many people are propelled into the industry by their creativity but find their time consumed by fulfilling orders and adminstrivia. "I'm not just a designer," observes Buraya-Kefelian. "I'm also a marketing manager, a wholesale professional, a customer service representative, a graphic designer, a photographer, a writer. It's a multifaceted profession. I do enjoy the design part and some of the administrative parts and the interaction with people. But some of it you don't enjoy, but you still have to get better at it and seek help if you need it so you can be better at it."

Meg Mahaffey, the dyer behind Sleep Season Goods, started dyeing while working at Whole Foods, earning herself a cult following among Denver stitchers, who snapped up her yarns at local shops including Fancy Tiger Crafts and Wild Yarns as well as at craft



shows. When her job at Whole Foods was eliminated, she took a hard look at whether to jump full-time into dyeing. Concerned about cash flow—she and her husband both need to work to maintain their household—and stressed about the possible workload, she instead accepted a full-time bookkeeping job.

"It's not my time," she says. "Hopefully in the future it will be. That's the point of building a business slowly. You don't want to jump in and invest and maybe end up not liking it or find that it's too much work."

The Not-So-Soft Sell

Because starting a yarn business these days requires little more than a room of one's own, a computer and some moxie, competition is fierce. With knitters and crocheters gleaning their ideas for projects—and the yarns to make them—from myriad channels—magazines, books, yarn shops, Ravelry, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook and the like—it's incumbent on the craftpreneur to make herself heard above the chatter. With so many patterns, hand-dyed yarns and fibers clamoring for the attention of knitters and crocheters, going viral in 2015 may be a matter of luck, talent and savvy social marketing. *(continued on page 58)*



"I want to make sure I'm always producing something of good quality, that I'm not rushing. I want my yarn to be perfect. I like being small and special."

—Meg Mahaffey, dyer, Sleep Season Goods



"In terms of teaching success, I have to rely on the stacks of evaluations. And what comes through the most is people saying, 'I learned more than I thought I would.' And that 'the teacher handled everybody kindly and patiently and fairly.' People really care about that. Being a nice human being in the classroom is important."

—Lorilee Beltman, designer and teacher



"I'm naturally motivated—maybe it comes from being a nurse or a single mother, but that has made things easier for sure. Procrastination does not work. There's no room for that."

—Tanis Williams, owner,
String Theory Hand Dyed Yarn

Knitting teacher and designer Lorilee Beltman had a banner business year in 2014, in part because her Interweave DVD "Vertical Stranding" launched and in part because one of her patterns—an A-line vertically stranded skirt called Bold Move (shown above left)—went viral, bringing thousands of dollars into the business.

"Going viral" in this case, however, involved more than the attention of a pivotal blogger. The skirt, which debuted in a Plucky Knitter kit, got boosts from blog posts by Sarah Dimond, the Plucky Knitter herself, as well as Beltman's own updates on Facebook. And it generated plenty of buzz when a model sashayed down the catwalk at Stitches West wearing the flattering piece. A serendipitous post about the design by *Vogue Knitting's* editorial director, Trisha Malcolm, who admired the garment, pushed its profile even higher. "Has that ever happened before? No," says Beltman. "But I'll take it."

Beltman is on the precipice of another breakthrough as well. The online tutoring juggernaut Craftsy debuted Beltman's first class, "Knit Faster With Continental Knitting," on January 8. Six days later, 2,000 students had registered. Though Beltman has taught this class at yarn shops around the country and at fiber events (a Craft-Sanity podcast video of Beltman demonstrating her Continental knitting moves has garnered more than one million views since 2006), she anticipates that the Craftsy class will be another boon to her business.

Like a lot of entrepreneurs in the yarn industry, Beltman spends a good deal of time working to keep her name in front of fans and potential clients. Having owned a yarn shop—City Knitting in Grand Rapids, Michigan—she has a strong network with whom she keeps in touch with a regular newsletter. She also consistently maintains a blog on her website and is an avid Raveler and Facebooker.

Tanis Williams estimates that she spends two hours a day on social media, updating Facebook, starting knit-alongs on Ravelry, pinning and now tweeting. "I'm not personally a social media person," she says, "but I'm learning. It's absolutely necessary for marketing, and it's what everybody is doing."

The amigurumi elephant in the room, of course, is the question, Can a yarn industry creative make a living doing what she loves? "I do make a living," remarks Lisa Souza. "But I'm certainly not traveling to Europe on what I make."

Olga Buraya-Kefelian, who designs for yarn companies but makes the bulk of her income from her extensive pattern catalog on Ravelry, describes the money as survivable. However, there are other benefits: "I get to pick what to design and what to do. It is a dream. Whether it's profitable or not is a matter of marketing and successfully balancing all the other facets of being a self-published designer."



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"I love my Stella light! I've been using it in my studio. On my work table it makes everything a little clearer and as a task lamp, next to me when I'm knitting or fixing something tricky – A LOT clearer. How did I do without it? I didn't know what I was missing." - Norah Gaughan, KNITTER, DESIGNER, AUTHOR



www.stellalighting.com

REINVENTOR, REVISITED



When **YMN** was revived 10 years ago, **Karin Strom** was Editorial Director Trisha Malcolm's first choice to lead it, and she shaped the magazine for five eventful years. Karin and I sat down recently to talk about her time at **YMN** and the state of the yarn industry.

Erin Slonaker: What had you been doing before you took on YMN?

KS: During my career I've worked in many textile- and yarn-related capacities, from being a fabric swatcher for a costume company in New York—I had the onerous job of going around to fabric houses sourcing materials for ballet and opera costumes—to working as a creative director for yarn and furniture companies, and editing craft books and magazines. Just prior to taking on **YMN**, I had been working freelance in the craft industry, writing and doing project management, and photo styling for home décor catalogs.

My interest in textiles goes back to when I was a kid. My father traveled a lot and would always bring me interesting fabrics and items back from exotic ports. There was craftiness on both sides of my family, from Swedish weavers and textile printers on my dad's side to my maternal grandmother's prowess in all of the needle-arts. I have a BFA with a crafts focus, and after college I traveled and researched textile tradi-

tions in Europe and the American Southwest, and learned spinning, natural dyeing and weaving. For a number of years, I exhibited my multimedia woven, knit and crochet pieces in galleries.

// **YMN SERVED AS A GO-TO RESOURCE, AND PEOPLE IN ALL AREAS OF THE INDUSTRY EMBRACED IT. IT WAS REALLY FUN BEING IN THE CATBIRD SEAT.** //

ES: What was the industry like at the time?

KS: The yarn industry was really strong in 2005, and things were changing rapidly. There was no Ravelry. Social media hadn't been adopted by virtually everyone. YouTube wasn't an instant online stitch guide. And there weren't free patterns galore. But there was Knitters' Review and Knitty, and the online knitting community was beginning to be a real force.

Knitting was the *Zeitgeist*. Stars were knitting on movie sets. People were opening yarn shops all over the place. But there was also a big transition going on in terms of the business of yarn. This is an oversimplification, but the traditional yarn shop owner had been someone who was primarily a great knitter who opened a shop to provide people with yarn and classes. During the boom, that evolved. Savvy business folks who saw knitting and yarn as a great niche to get into and passionate yarn people with strong business plans were opening shops.

ES: How did you go about creating this magazine in its modern form?

KS: We used the original incarnation of *Yarn Market News* as inspiration. I remember going through old issues and being amazed at how much of the content was still pertinent. Some of it was downright entertaining. Of course, some of it was dated too. At the same time we looked at what would be of real help to current shop owners as businesspeople, and that's where the "Smart" columns came from. At first I was afraid it might be hard to keep coming up with content, but there was always a plethora of information and interesting stories to cover.

ES: What were some of the guiding principles for you as editor?

KS: From the noteworthy covers to the back-page interview, the goal was to inform, entertain and stimulate. I wanted the magazine to be very visual and well written, which was easy, since yarn is so luscious, and I was working with a great team. Things were happening really fast in the industry, and we made every effort to stay on top of trends, remain neutral and cover some of the more con-

troversial issues. I wanted *YMN* to be a resource for everyone in the industry, from shop owners to producers to designers, and to present information in a fresh and inspiring way. I think it has continued to fulfill that mission.

ES: I'm still getting compliments for covers that you and Joe Vior, our creative director, created.

KS: I loved working on the covers! They were like yarn porn. The concept was to create a visual pun using yarn as the medium. It got to be crazy—Joe would be wrapping a hundred little balls with purple yarn to make grapes. We'd seriously discuss things like, "How do we make sorbet from angora?" I think my favorite still might be the first one, the Colinette headdress, because it set the bar for yarny awesomeness. Our goal became to make each one more intriguing than the last.

ES: How have you seen the industry change over the past 10 years?

KS: Yarn doesn't fly out the door like it did in 2005. Today's bricks-and-mortar LYS faces challenges including discounters, online retailers and yarn companies selling retail. To say nothing of a challenging economy and knitters and crocheters having a backlog of yarn on hand. To keep a shop healthy, you really have to build a brand, keep up with trends and technology, diversify, be a destination, sponsor events, seek out a unique and changing array of products, offer good instruction and so on. It's not for the faint of heart.

ES: Why do you think YMN is still important to the industry?

KS: One thing that people kept saying when *YMN* first came out was that it somehow validated our industry, gave it a professional image that had been lacking, and that's still important. In fact, in these challenging times, it may be even more crucial.

ES: Are there things you wish you could have done with YMN before you left? I'm taking notes!

KS: I feel that the Smart Business Conference is one of the best things we did. The people who attend get so much from the interaction with their counterparts as well as from the speakers and programs. But I always wanted to do a *Yarn Market News* cruise...

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