



Y A R N M A R K E T N E W S

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MAY 2016



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TIME



ROSE CALLAHAN

Do you have time to do it all? Is it even possible to do it all? I wonder about

that. The pressures of running a yarn store or company in this modern age—when, in addition to being available during regular business hours, we're also supposed to be on social media when our clients and customers are most likely to be browsing the Internet—mean there's little opportunity to "turn off." But something has to give, right? You need to nurture every aspect of your life—your business, your family, your own personal time. How can you do it all?

I'm writing this letter in early March, immediately following Ria Story's session at the Yarn Market News Smart Business Conference in Atlanta, in which she tackles this issue head-on. She argues that just *saying* something is a priority isn't the same as actually *making* it a priority. Where do you spend your time and your money? Where and when do you do your best thinking? Do they line up with the priorities you have set for your business? You need to synch up your actions and your plans and make careful decisions as you go about your day.

With that in mind, this issue of *Yarn Market News* features articles that will, we hope, give you the tools to make choices about what you do with your time. Today, will you focus on your inventory? Kimberly Agbayani, Tolt Yarn and Wool's inventory manager, offers some helpful tricks for dividing your inventory into categories and managing the in- and outflow of product through category-specific reports. Or maybe you'll work on your business plan to incorporate different kinds of products, like the stores Daryl Brower interviewed on page 48, who have all diversified their inventory categories to better handle the slow times. Tomorrow, perhaps, you'll look at your pricing methods and determine if the system is working for your customers and your staff (see page 38).

Are you planning to be a vendor at an upcoming festival? In that case, take a few minutes to read Carol Sulcoski's important article on page 36 to ensure you're handling out-of-state taxes correctly. Think about new yarns, check out the latest books available to crafters, and even consider the growing trend in U.S.-made yarns in other articles this issue. We know that trying to do it all is a recipe for disaster, but we at *Yarn Market News* hope that the information in our magazine will help you cross off a few more items on your to-do list.

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



on the cover

Eat Your Veggies

Briggs & Little's 100% wool, 2-ply worsted-weight yarn Heritage covers a bunch of carrots for the cutest bunny. We used a brilliant orange, of course, but you can choose from 45 different colors. www.briggsandlittle.com

Photograph by Marcus Tullis



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Herringbone Shawl



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Contrarian Shawls 2, an eBook

10 Shawls to Knit & Crochet in Fibra Natura Yarns



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MAY 2016

features

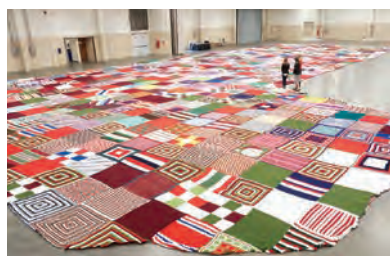
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The burgeoning cachet of "Made in the USA."

By Leslie Petrovski

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Jennifer Edgar of Eucalan

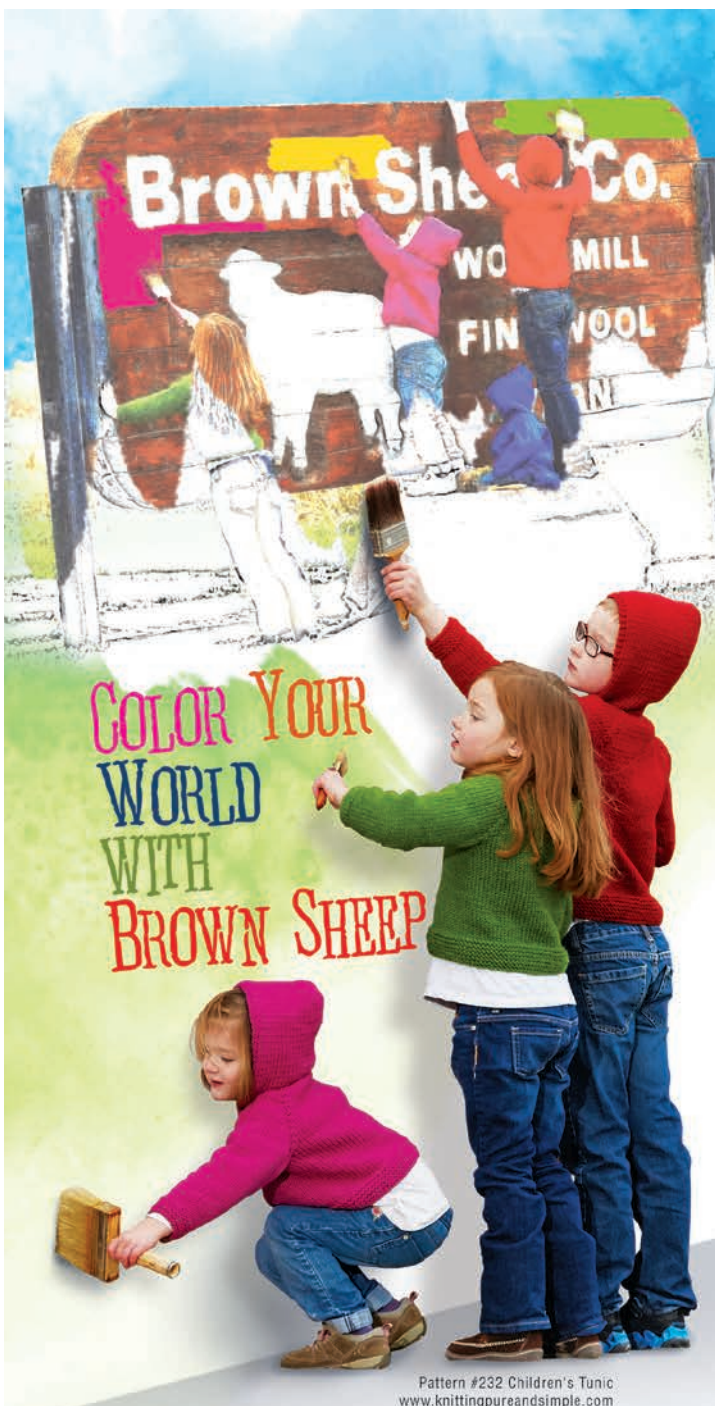
The background of the advertisement is a collage of various needle arts supplies. At the top, there are several pairs of scissors with colorful handles (purple, green, pink, blue) and wooden knitting needles. A wooden folding stand is on the left. In the center, the brand name 'Mirvana Needle Arts' is written in a cursive font with a pink lotus flower logo above it. Below this, a red banner contains the text 'Distributed by The KnittingZone Inc'. The bottom half of the image features a white background with various small items: colorful yarn, small panda figurines, a circular gauge, a small book, and more knitting tools. The brand name 'HiyaHiya®' is prominently displayed in a bold, serif font, with 'North America' written below it in a smaller, sans-serif font.

Mirvana Needle Arts

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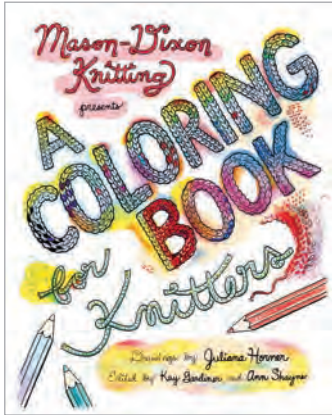
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Come visit Kelbourne Woolens & The Fibre Co. at TNNA in Booth 578 to see what's new!

COLOR YOUR WORLD



▼ Break out that 64 pack of Crayolas. *A Coloring Book for Knitters*, created by **Kay Gardiner** and **Ann Shayne** of Mason-Dixon Knitting fame (ably assisted by illustrator Juliana Horner), features the same kind of winding, mindfulness-inducing illustrations typical of many adult coloring books, only this time with knitting-themed images. Add color to sweater yokes without the colorwork. Follow an impossible tangle of yarn without feeling the need to detangle. Or test color choices on mittens without swatching.

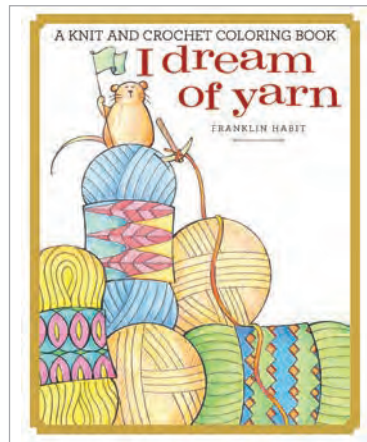
The two decided to publish a knitting coloring book after Shayne stumbled on a pile at a bookstore and realized there wasn't one specifically geared to knitters. Though neither Gardiner nor Shayne had jumped on the coloring-book bandwagon prior to creating one of their own, they've found that staying inside the

lines can be quite satisfying. "Coloring is weirdly hypnotic," says Shayne, whose preferred coloring tool is the crayon. "And it is, quite simply, very fun."

Gardiner, who likes the smooth finish of watercolor pens, says coloring makes it possible for people to enjoy the relaxing aspects of a creative pursuit without having to learn a new skill. "Knitting is relaxing for those of us who already know how to knit," she says, "but it is a skill to be acquired, and some people want to get to the pleasure part of it instantly. Take mittens, for example. If you know you're never going to knit a mitten, you can color one." Just ask Shayne: "I am never, ever knitting Latvian mittens. But, by golly, I can color a Latvian mitten."

The longtime bloggers and knitting-book authors self-published *A Coloring Book for Knitters* using the print-on-demand platforms CreateSpace by Amazon and IngramSpark. The 64-page book took the top spot on Amazon soon after it came out. www.masondixonknitting.com/buy-a-book

Another well-known knitting personality is jumping into the fray as well. Designer/illustrator/knitting instructor/blogger **Franklin Habit's** coloring book, *I Dream of Yarn* (published by Get Creative 6), is due out on June 7. Knitters can look forward to coloring in Habit's iconic illustrations. www.sixthandspring.com



SEE THE LITE



▼ Yarn bombing's gone corporate. Last December, Miller Lite premiered a wintry billboard in Times Square—an homage to the ugly holiday sweater—crocheted by Brooklyn-based street artist **London Kaye**. Hovering over the corner of 49th Street and 7th Avenue, the billboard required 76,500 yards of yarn and an estimated 300,000 crochet stitches to complete. It depicted a stitch-motif reindeer, bottles of Miller Lite, Fair Isle-style colorwork and the message "Happy Holidays." The billboard was crafted by Kaye and nine others in Lion Brand Yarn's Vanna's Choice and Pound of Love. It weighed more than 300 pounds and was the first crocheted billboard to be hung in the heart of midtown Manhattan.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR AMERICA

▼ **Imperial Yarn** and **Farm to Finery LLC** have joined forces to maximize their ability to support American textile manufacturing. The alliance unites Dan and Jeanne Carver, owners of the 30,000-acre Imperial Stock Ranch in Shaniko, Oregon, and pioneers in the slow textile movement, with alpaca producers and Farm to Finery founders Stacie Chavez and Lynn Edens. Farm to Finery was established to help build a stronger market for American-grown animal fiber. (Edens also operates one of this country's largest alpaca

breeding operations and founded the independent American yarn brand Our Back 40.)

"We will have new yarn offerings in time for the [National NeedleArts Association] convention in June, including our 50/50 merino/alpaca sport weight and our merino fingering weight—100 percent American fibers spun in the U.S.," says Jeanne Carver. "We will also energize the color palettes of our existing yarns, and we are strengthening our finished product line." The yarn will continue to be branded "Imperial Yarn."

"We quickly realized that working together and combining Imperial Stock Ranch's well-known brand and U.S. manufacturing connections with the capital and business development expertise of Farm to Finery would enhance the abilities of both organizations to realize their highly aligned missions," explains Edens. "Put more simply, we knew that by working together, we could sell more American-grown, American-made yarn and reflect the efforts of an even wider range of American fiber growers in our products."



THE **EAGLE** HAS LANDED

▼ Nothing like a little yarn bombing to warm up a film festival. In January, attendees of the Sundance Film Festival were treated not only to a surprise screening of the feel-good movie *Eddie the Eagle*; they also got to witness some top-level yarn bombing. The film, which tells the story of Eddie Edwards, who became the first ski jumper ever to represent Great Britain at the Olympic games, features a sweater, hand-knit by Edwards's mother, emblazoned with the intarsia phrase "I'm Eddie's Mum."

Partnering with Eddie's production company, MARV films, a team from **Jimmy Beans Wool** plastered Park City, Utah, with large knitted swatches bearing the letter E; festooned trees with yarn-covered E's; and presented celebs with bespoke sweaters that read "I'm Taron's Mum," "I'm Eddie's Director" and "I Play Eddie." (The film stars Taron Egerton as Eddie and Hugh Jackman as his coach.)

The yarn bombing kicked off a month-long campaign to use knitting and crochet to promote the movie under the hashtags #iknitforeddie and #icrochetforeddie. The campaign asked stitchers to make hats using a free "E" ski hat pattern, bomb social media with project selfies, wear the hats to the film, and visit Jackman and Egerton on tour, wearing (what else?) their "E" hats. The purpose behind all this stitching? According to Jimmy Beans, it's to grow the knitting and crochet community and show Hollywood the benefits of using needlework in film.

www.iknitforeddie.com

MILLING AROUND

▼ "Made in America" yarn just got another boost. Through a Direct Public Offering (DPO) opportunity by the nonprofit Economic Development and Financing Corporation, California residents were able to invest in **Mendocino Wool and Fiber**, a start-up mill that will enable Golden State farmers to process their wool locally. Matthew Gilbert, a longtime sheep shearer, is the man behind the mill. Having watched thousands of pounds of wool go to waste over the years, Gilbert dreamed of starting a mill as a way to support local growers and sustain Mendocino County's wool-growing tradition. The state's first-ever DPO was launched with a minimum goal of \$250,000 to fund the mill; \$356,000 had been raised by the February 9 deadline.

FIND **LOVE**

▼ The e-commerce start-up **LoveCrafts** received a new round of funding (\$20 million) in November that will enable the London-based company to improve its technology and increase revenue from markets in Germany and the United States. Part digital retailer, social media platform and inspiration generator (think online-shop-plus-Ravelry-plus-Pinterest), LoveCrafts launched in 2012. Today the company has 80 employees, sells into more than 100 countries and maintains two major "maker" sites, Loveknitting.com and Lovetrochet.com. Company cofounder Edward Griffiths has said that LoveCrafts is dedicated to creating a home for makers, "one craft at a time." Could sewing and quilting be far behind?

ONE FOR THE **RECORD** BOOKS

▼ The *Guinness World Record* book has a new entry: largest knit and/or crochet Christmas stocking, the work of 830 knitters and crocheters from the U.S., Canada and Ireland. Sponsored by **Caron** and designed to raise money for the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation, the stocking weighed in at 1,640 pounds and measured 76 feet wide and 136 feet long. After being displayed in Fayetteville, North Carolina, the stocking was dismantled and cleaned; the 1,100 blanket-sized squares were distributed to military hospitals. Finally, a big "Happy Anniversary" to Caron, which is celebrating its centennial this year (the Christmas stocking helped launch the company's year-long yarn party). As part of its birthday bash, the brand is launching 100 new patterns. Watch www.yarnspirations.com/caron for details.



PUBLISH AND FLOURISH

▼ To celebrate the store's second anniversary, the team at **Tolt Yarn and Wool** in Carnation, Washington, decided to create a book about the American yarns and producers they love. "Things have a way of happening around here," explains Tolt owner Anna Dianich. "We thought, Wouldn't it be fun to write about our favorite farms and favorite yarns and have our friends work on it?"

With only six months until the store's birthday, *Farm to Needle: Stories of Wool* became a community endeavor, much like a barn raising. Lara Schmidt, who was responsible for Tolt's initial branding, designed and project-managed the book and wrote copy. Seattle-based lifestyle and craft photographer Kathy Cadigan shot the photos. Tolt's operations and inventory manager, Kimberly Agbayani, crafted the budget and also did some writing. Kathleen Tarrant con-



tributed wordsmithing, as did designer Susan Moskwa, who edited *Farm to Needle*.

With a stunning cover embossed with a sheep silhouette, *Farm to Needle* debuted in time for Tolt's shopiversary as a striking narrative and photo tribute to five yarns (their own Snoqualmie Valley skeins, along with Imperial Stock Ranch, YOTH, Thirteen Mile Worsted and Twirl) and the hardworking farmers and manufacturers who produce them. Included too are six patterns for accessories

and garments that showcase each yarn, plus profiles of their designers.

"This project was not about making money," Dianich says. "It's something we love and are passionate about. The main goal is to share the stories of our favorite producers and bring them to knitters." *Farm to Needle* retails for \$29. www.toltyarnandwool.com

ALL-AMERICAN ACCESSORIES

▼ In response to customer interest in yarny accessories, **Quince & Co.** spun off a new company called **Twig & Horn** last year to provide gorgeous American-made crafting tools for needle artists.

Quince founder Pam Allen first partnered with a soap maker to create a lanolin-rich wool wash that would refresh and "lanolize" wool sweaters. The company then branched out to create a wool-blend tote (fabric, American bison handles and bag made in the USA), buttons crafted from discarded buffalo bones, and a 4x4-inch gauge ruler and needle gauge made by a woodworker in Maine. In addition to the above, the Portland, Maine-based Twig & Horn currently offers hand-turned yarn bowls in American birch or maple; elegant needle vases by Ariela Kuh of ANK Ceramics in Lincolnville, Maine; a highly curated collection of books and magazines; removable, coated stitch markers; a concrete notions dish; and ceramic mug and pour-over (for coffee).

"There were a number of knitting accessories that Quince knitters wanted—simple, elegant yarn bowls, square gauge rulers—that weren't readily available in the marketplace," says Twig & Horn owner Ryan Fitzgerald, Pam Allen's son. "We decided that if they weren't out there, we should make them. It fit naturally with our core mission at Quince to bring beauty, quality and functionality to knitters, but we wanted to give it a different look and feel from Quince and allow it to function as its own thing." www.twigandhorn.com



HOW SWEET IT IS!

▼ There's a new luxury yarn brand in town. **Sugar Bush** launches at the summer TNNA show with six yarns ranging from fingering weight to bulky. The Canadian company, an independent subsidiary of **Spinrite**, is named for the source of maple syrup. "What's more Canadian than maple syrup?" asks Michelle MacDonald, general manager of Sugar Bush. "Maple syrup predominates in our area; it's sweet, and that describes our yarn."

Sweet, indeed. Three of the yarns are 100 percent extrafine merino: Chill, a bulky single, comes in 24 colors; Crisp, a plied DK, is available in 32 colors; and Bold, a worsted weight, will debut in 42 hues. A chunky cotton/acrylic with a lashing of metallic polyester, Glaze comes in 10 colors. Bliss, a sport weight, blends 65 percent extrafine merino, 25 percent mulberry silk and 10 percent cashmere and launches in 32 colors. Finally, Itty-Bitty, an amalgam of 65 percent wool, 25 percent nylon and 10 percent cashmere, puts its best foot forward with a suitable-for-socks-and-shawls yarn available in 10 solids and 15 variegateds. Each yarn premieres with a booklet featuring 10 or so patterns that include at least two crochet designs.

MacDonald, who is currently knitting a sweater in Crisp, says the yarn is "buttery in your hands. It's a wonderful product supported by great Canadian and U.S. designs, and it's reasonably priced. We've put together a package that we think will be very appealing to retail stores."



AMERICANS IN COLOGNE

▼ For the first time, 15 North American vendors banded together to create a strong “New World” presence at one of the largest handicraft trade fairs in the world. Held in Cologne, Germany, in March, **H+H Cologne** featured sewing, crocheting, knitting, embroidery and crafting exhibitors from 44 countries, attracting some 15,000 retailers, distributors and institutional buyers. For people attending the show, explains Darrin Stern, director of new business development for Koelnmesse, Inc./ Cologne International Trade Fairs, this business-to-business event offers a glimpse of what’s happening in the global handcrafting sector.

Given the sheer scale of the show—380-plus exhibitors in 350,000 square feet of space—the North

American Expo made it possible for American companies to share expenses and create a larger and more dramatic physical footprint than the companies could on their own. Participating vendors included Artyarns, byAnnie.com, the Craft and Hobby Association, ChiaoGoo, Cocoknits, della Q, Iris, Knit Collage, Koigu, Loopy Mango, Lorna’s Laces, Mrs. Crosby Loves to Play, Stitchcraft Marketing (representing yarns from Blue Sky Fibers, Bijou Basin Ranch, Mountain Colors and Mountain Meadow Wool), SweetGeorgia and The Warm Company.

“When you see how massive some of these booths are, it’s easy to get lost,” explains Stern. “But when you have 15 companies speaking in unison, you have a collective voice.”

A NEW LOOK FOR ANNIE’S



▼ **Annie’s**, the craft multimedia/retail juggernaut, has taken a page from the fashion industry with its new knitting and crochet pattern collection. Launched in April, Annie’s Signature Designs represents the first time the company has released a cohesive, seasonal knitwear collection that adheres to a predetermined color story. Featuring 20-plus exclusive-to-Annie’s knitting and crochet patterns, the collection debuted in two digital lookbooks that showcased garments for women and children, accessories and home décor items by Lisa Gentry, Jill Hanratty, Meghan Jones, Charles Voth, Kara Gott Warner and in-house designer Lena Skvagerson. Visit AnniesSignatureDesigns.com to see more.

IN THE RED

▼ Women’s Choice Award winner **Red Heart** is donating \$250,000 this year to support Red Cross disaster-relief efforts in the United States, Canada and Mexico. As part of the campaign, which launched in early 2016, Red Heart and the Red Cross are asking people to #StitchAHug for someone in need by crafting a Red Heart Cares blanket (a white knit or crocheted blanket featuring a giant red cross) or pillow for a disaster victim or as a gift to another charity; both are available as free patterns. Red Heart is also offering free patterns for a vintage first aid kit. For information on patterns and where to donate money and blankets, visit www.redheart/redcross.



GET YOUR KICKS

▼ Need new sneakers? Los Angeles-based **JS Shoes** can knit you a pair that are lightweight, breathable and customizable to each foot. Using knitting machinery that knits three-dimensionally, this unique manufacturing method uses only enough material to produce a single shoe at a time, eliminating waste. Offering a classic slip-on style in five colors, which can be mixed and matched (blue lining for one

foot, yellow for the other, say), JS Shoes are knitted individually, enabling the company to give customers a buy-one-by-one option. Uppers are knitted from a cotton/polyester fiber blend; the soles, made from an EVA polymer, are glued on after the shoes are made. They sell for \$89 a pair or \$45 for an individual shoe; a variegated rainbow knit goes for \$129 per pair or \$65 a piece. www.jsshoe.com



GOT GAUGE?



▼ Need to measure for gauge, and there's no tape measure in sight? Temporary measuring tattoos to the rescue! Staffers at Reno's Jimmy Beans Wool, responding to a need for a can't-lose-it tool, contacted popular jewelry designer **Anna Bee** (who's also designed a line of temporary metallic tattoos), asking her to devise a wearable solution to this common

problem. The result? Three temporary gold tattoo bracelets (including a shiny set of straight knitting needles with half-inch tick marks) to give and wear. Perfect for knit night or any time you want to represent for knitting. Available at jimmybeanswool.com.

UH-OH, CHANEL

▼ After the debut of Chanel's Metiers d'Art collection in Rome last December, social media outlets lit up, all abuzz over a Chanel knock-off of a Fair Isle original. Shetland-based knitwear designer **Mati Ventrillon** alleged that the Chanel Fair Isle designs that walked the runway closely resembled those purchased by a Chanel team that had visited her studio the previous summer. On Facebook, she wrote, "I specifically said that I was going to sell [the design] to them based on the reputation of the Chanel house and because I knew they would not copy my design."

Ventrillon called out a few of Chanel's pieces, in particular a vest and pullover with dark backgrounds and intricate motifs, which she displayed alongside her designs, maintaining that her argument was not for the sake of monetary gain but to defend the value of craft. Though knitting motifs exist in the public domain, the similarity between Chanel's knits and Ventrillon's was unmistakable. Shetlanders, knitters and fashion media rose to her defense.

Within days, a spokesperson for Chanel released a statement apologizing for the issue, saying that going forward, the company will credit Ventrillon's work. Chanel's statement read: "Chanel will credit Mati Ventrillon by including the words 'Mati Ventrillon design' in its communication tools to recognise her as the source of inspiration for the knitwear models in question. Chanel recognises that this situation resulted from a dysfunctionality within its teams and has presented its apologies."

The upside? Not only has Chanel posted about Ventrillon and Shetland knitting on its website, but other stories have emerged worldwide about the issue, raising awareness about Shetland's knitting tradition and knitting in general.

FAIRY TALE ENDING



▼ What do you get when you combine an angel-faced lamb, a talented photographer and social media? A six-figure, three-book publishing deal. Vermont farmers **John and Jennifer Churchman** found themselves in this position after self-publishing the true-life story of how their border collie helped save the life of Sweet Pea, an orphaned lamb who took ill after injuring her foot.

The resulting book, *Sweet Pea and Friends: The SheepOver*—funded by Kickstarter—features

photo-collage illustrations documenting the lamb's return to health and the all-critter party—a "sheepover," naturally—that the Churchmans held to celebrate her recovery.

A post by a bookseller on *Publishers Weekly's* blog landed the couple a literary agent, who sparked a bidding war with submission baskets featuring the picture book, yarn spun from wool from the Churchmans' flock and other Vermont treats. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers won the auction; *The SheepOver* has since made its way to *The New York Times'* bestseller list for children's picture books.

Next up for Sweet Pea's adopted mom and dad: *The Brave and Mighty Little Finn*, about another orphaned, and highly photogenic, lamb, and *Laddie and Maisie Grace*, about the Churchmans' border collies. www.sweetpeafriends.com

IN MEMORIAM

Alden Amos (1938–2015)

▼ Alden Amos, whom *The New York Times* called the "Stradivari of spinning wheels," died November 28, 2015, in Jackson, California. He was 77. The author of *The Alden Amos Big Book of Handspinning*, Amos settled in northern California following tours of duty in Vietnam. His wheels—he built some 600 spinning wheels in his lifetime—were legendary among spinners, who would wait years to secure one. He is survived by his wife, Stephenie Gaustad, an expert spinner and author of *The Practical Spinner's Guide—Cotton, Flax, Hemp*, and his children, stepchildren, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

May 7–8
Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, Maryland
sheepandwool.org

May 13–15
Shepherd's Harvest Sheep and Wool Festival
Washington County Fairgrounds
Lake Elmo, Minnesota
shepherdsharvestfestival.org

May 13–15
Vogue Knitting LIVE
Pasadena Convention Center
Pasadena, California
vogueknittinglive.com

May 14–15
Central Pennsylvania Fiber Festival
Lycoming County Fairgrounds
Hughesville, Pennsylvania
centralpafiberfest.com

May 14–15
Long Island Fleece and Fiber Fair
Hallockville Museum Farm
Riverhead, New York
hallockville.com/fleece-and-fiber-fair

May 14–15
New Hampshire Sheep & Wool
Deerfield Fairground
Deerfield, New Hampshire
nhswga.com

May 18–22
The Northwest LYS Tour
Puget Sound, Washington
lystour.com

May 20–22
Snake River Fiber Fest
Eastern Idaho Technical College
Idaho Falls, Idaho
srfiberartists.org

May 21
Rhode Island Fiber Festival & Craft Fair
Coggeshall Farm
Bristol, Rhode Island
coggeshallfarm.org

May 21–22
Kentucky Sheep & Fiber Festival
Masterson State Park
Lexington, Kentucky
kentuckysheepandfiber.com

May 27–28
Middle Tennessee Fiber Festival
Dickson County Fairgrounds
Dickson, Tennessee
tnfiberfestival.com

May 27–29
Great Lakes Fiber Show
Wayne County Fairgrounds
Wooster, Ohio
greatlakesfibershow.com

May 28–29
Massachusetts Sheep and Woolcraft Fair
Cumington Fairgrounds
Cumington, Massachusetts
masheepwool.org

May 29–30
FiberTrain Wool Festival
Lloyd Square
Nampa, Idaho
fibertrainfestival.com

June 3–4
Hoosier Hills Fiber Festival
Johnson County Fairgrounds
Franklin, Indiana
hoosierhillsfiberfestival.com

June 3–4
Magnolia State Fiber Festival
Vicksburg Convention Center
Vicksburg, Mississippi
msff.net

June 3–6
Vogue Knitting LIVE Destination Experience
Imperial Stock Ranch
Shaniko, Oregon
vogueknitting.com/events/vklive_destination_experience

June 4–5
Flag Wool and Fiber Festival
Pioneer Museum
Flagstaff, Arizona
flagwool.com

June 4–5
Maine Fiber Frolic
Windsor Fairgrounds
Windsor, Maine
fiberfrolic.com

June 9–12
Estes Park Wool Market
Fairgrounds at Stanley Park
Estes Park, Colorado
visitestespark.com

June 11–12
Central New York Fiber Festival
Butternut Hill Campground
Bouckville, New York
cnyfiber.org

June 11–12
Iowa Sheep and Wool Festival
Jasper County Fairgrounds
Colfax, Iowa
iowasheepandwoolfestival.com

June 11–13
TNNA Summer Trade Show
Walter E. Washington Convention Center
Washington, D.C.
tnna.org

June 17–19
Sheep Is Life Celebration
Diné College, Tsailé Campus
Navajo Nation
navajolifeway.org

June 18
Worldwide Knit in Public Day
Multiple international locations
www.kipday.com

June 18–19
Mid-Ohio Fiber Fair
Bryn Du Mansion Field House
Granville, Ohio
midohiofiberfair.com

June 24–26
Black Sheep Fiber Gathering
Lane County Fairgrounds
Eugene, Oregon
blacksheepgathering.org

June 24–25
Houston Fiber Fest
Berry Center
Cypress, Texas
houstonfiberfest.com

July 13–16
The Knit and Crochet Show
Embassy Suites Charleston Airport
Hotel and Convention Center
Charleston, South Carolina
knitandcrochetshow.com

July 29–31
Many Hands Fiber Arts Festival
Telluride Elementary School Gym
Telluride, Colorado
manyhandsfiberartsfestival.org

July 30–August 6
Convergence: Handweavers Guild of America
Convention Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
weavespindye.org

July 30–August 14
Hot August Knits Yarn Crawl
Northern Colorado and
Southern Wyoming
hotaugustknits.com

July 31–August 6
New England Fiber Arts Retreat
Medomak Retreat Center
Washington, Maine
medomakretreatcenter.com/newenglandfiberartsretreat.php

August 4–7
Stitches Midwest
Schaumburg Renaissance and
Convention Center
Schaumburg, Illinois
knittinguniverse.com/midwest

August 17–21
Michigan Fiber Festival
Allegan County Fairgrounds
Allegan, Michigan
michiganfiberfestival.info

August 19–20
Great Basin Fiber Arts Fair
Salt Lake County Equestrian Park
South Jordan, Utah
greatbasinfiberartsfair.org

August 20–28
Yarn Along the Rockies (Yarn Crawl)
Colorado Front Range
yarnalongtherockies.com

August 31–September 5
Monterey County Fair Wool Show
Monterey County Fairgrounds
Monterey, California
montereycountyfair.com

September 3–4
Heart of New Mexico Fiber Gathering
Wild Life West Nature Park

Edgewood, New Mexico
heartofnmfibergathering.com

September 7–10
Fiber College of Maine
Searsport Shores Ocean Camping
Searsport, Maine
fibercollege.org

September 8–10
Georgia FiberFest
Columbus Convention & Trade Center
Columbus, Georgia
gafiberfest.com

September 8–11
Wisconsin Sheep and Wool Festival
Jefferson County Fair Park
Jefferson, Wisconsin
wisconsinsheepandwoolfestival.com

September 10–11
Garden State Sheep and Fiber Festival
Hunterdon County Fairgrounds
Lambertville, New Jersey
njsheep.org

September 10–11
Pennsylvania Endless Mountains Fiber Festival
Harford Fairgrounds
Harford, Pennsylvania
pafiberfestival.com

September 10–11
Salida Fiber Festival
Riverside Park
Salida, Colorado
facebook.com/salidafiberfestival

September 17–18
Finger Lakes Fiber Festival
Hemlock Fairgrounds
Hemlock, New York
gvhg.org/fiber-fest

September 22–25
Stitches Texas
Irving Convention Center
Irving, Texas
knittinguniverse.com/texas

September 24–45
Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival
Clackamas County Event Center
Canby, Oregon
flockandfiberfestival.com

September 24–25
Shenandoah Valley Fiber Festival
Clarke County Ruritan Fairgrounds
Berryville, Virginia
shenandoahvalleyfiberfestival.com

September 24–25
Southern Adirondack Fiber Festival
Washington County Fairgrounds
Greenwich, New York
adkfiber.com

September 30–October 3
Vogue Knitting LIVE Destination Experience
North Light Fibers
Block Island, Rhode Island
vogueknitting.com/events/vklive_destination_experience

▼ Knitlandia: A Knitter Sees the World

By Clara Parkes

Stewart, Tabori & Chang; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1617691904

Part guidebook, part memoir, this slim hardback takes the reader on a road trip from Taos to Holderness and everywhere in between, de-



scribing a decade's worth of knitting festivals, shows and retreats with a perceptive insider's eye. While seasoned industry folk will nod along with every

chapter, the uninitiated will find themselves immersed in the intangible, peculiar details that define knitting culture as we know it. Though the narrative is global in its reach, the book is, in fact, quite personal: Rearrange the chapters, and one could follow Parkes's remarkable journey from fledgling blogger to prominent knitting personality. At its heart, this is a story of community. Writing with the affable tone of an enjoyable travel companion, Parkes illustrates throughout how no matter our differences, every one of us is bound by a common, well, thread.

▼ 60 Quick Cotton Knits

Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95
ISBN: 978-1942021919

The latest in Cascade's "60 Quick" designer-compilation series is dedicated to fast-to-knit styles for silky-soft Ultra Pima Cotton yarn. The patterns span all skill levels, with one third categorized as a shawl,



scarf or wrap; much of the remainder are tanks and cardigans. And whether the rating is beginner or

experienced, *fast* remains the focus—more intricate lace patterns, for instance, are worked in a simple shape to keep your stitching speedy. If cotton yarn conjures for-summer-knitting-only thoughts, take note of the hats and cabled wristers designed for cool-weather wear. Ultra Pima is available in two weights, as

well as in solids and hand-paints, and all options are represented here, with a few colorwork projects rounding out the fast-off-the-needles fun.

▼ Simple Color Knitting

By Erika Knight

St. Martin's Griffin; \$24.99
ISBN: 978-1250039095

Knight's primer on incorporating color into your knitting includes such ubiquitous colorwork techniques as stranding and intarsia, but it also reminds knitters of oft-overlooked ways to infuse hues. Among such easy-to-do ideas are plying (simply



carrying two strands of different yarns) and phasing (alternating different colors in overall stockinette or garter-stitch

patterns) that yield painterly effects. The 20 projects range from home-dec poufs and a faux-sheepskin throw to a basic, bulky unisex raglan pullover, which serves as a canvas for simple color treatments like random striping and slip-stitch patterning. A comprehensive section on color theory teaches that the success of a colorwork project depends as much on the shades you choose as on how you manage the yarns as you work. An extensive swatch gallery, along with charts and schematics rendered in watercolor washes that are refreshingly artsy yet easy to follow, make this book eye candy for stitchers of all levels.

▼ Knit Yourself In: Inventive Patterns to Tell Your Story in the Danish "Hen Knitting" Tradition

By Cecilie Kaurin and Linn Bryhn Jacobsen

Trafalgar Square Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1570767234

Instead of following a traditional pattern the next time you cast on, this book wants you to go rogue with your k's and p's. Each of the 20 stranded-colorwork projects is based on the concept of "hen knitting"—truly a misnomer, since it has nothing to do with chicken motifs; rather, it is the idea that a knitted object should reflect the maker's own personal life



yarn, color, stitch motifs and even garment shapes. In this book, the authors do include instructions on basic construction and measurements so knitters can focus on designing a personalized combination of motifs rather than customizing garment style or fit. All projects are worked in the round, which avoids not only slower wrong-side purling but also the interruption of the motif to work shaping for, say, a neckline. You will, however, have to set aside any lingering fear of the steek....

▼ Lithuanian Knitting: Continuing Traditions

By Donna Druchunas and June L. Hall

Double Vision Press; \$34.99
ISBN: 978-0989463836

Think of ethnic knitting styles, and Lithuania probably isn't the first region that comes to mind. So it's a perceptive choice on the part of Druchunas and Hall to present here



not only a collection of patterns, but also a comprehensive reference on this Baltic country and

its knitting culture. For fleece geeks, there's a chapter on native sheep breeds; the design- and history-minded will love the pictorial profiles of the country's folk art traditions. Making up the latter half of the book, the 29 traditional mitten, glove, sock and wrist-warmer patterns showcase vibrant, elaborate colorwork and folkloric details such as looped fringe, Baltic braids and entrelac trims. Both authors contributed seven years of travel, research, photography and pattern development to the book's creation. Though they're careful to state that the information within is subjective, it's clear that their thorough and heartfelt work has created a truly definitive volume.

▼ Wee Garter Stitch: Must-Have Knits for Modern Babies & Toddlers

By Vickie Howell

Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95
ISBN: 978-1942021926

Beginners and experienced knitters alike will embrace Howell's latest offering. Focused on the humble



garter stitch, the projects in this book are anything but humble. Innovative and adorable patterns that require

only knitting (plus a few yarn overs, short rows, increases and decreases)—pullovers, cardigans, pants, diaper covers, blankets, garlands, booties and more—will fill out a child's wardrobe and toy box. With its clear, easy-to-follow instructions, this book would make a great gift or teaching tool for someone who's never picked up sticks and string, though knitters of all skill levels will enjoy making the projects in this book.

▼ Weekend: Simple, Modern Knits

By Jen Geigley

Moon Phase Publications; \$28
ISBN: 978-0996580519

Though we admire the intricate cables and lace of our dream projects, we often find the simplest patterns to be the most wearable. To wit: Geigley's bulky seed-stitch GAP-tastic Cowl, which launched not just her career but more than 17,000 Ravelry projects as well. The designer continues her love affair with



super-bulky yarns in her debut book, presenting 12 outside designs that are meant to be knit in—

you guessed it—two days or less. The first three quarters of the book showcase each design in a moodily photographed, uber-hip lookbook—a shrewd choice, given that most of the simple patterns take up less than a page. Each

pattern's huge gauge turns the most subtle design details—hat crown decreases, for instance—into major statements, making this a satisfying collection for newbies, especially fashionistas looking to follow the sustainability trend.

▼ **Noro Silk Garden:**
The 20th Anniversary Collection
Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95
ISBN: 978-1942021902

A Noro fave turns 20! Silk Garden celebrates its birthday with 30 patterns that focus on the fun of knitting with the shade-shifting yarn and the wearing ease of the finished design. Mitered squares and

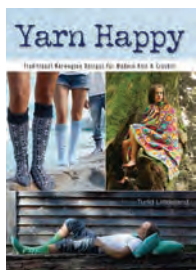


stripes, cables, lace and entre-lac patterns are all represented in this collection, which consists

primarily of accessories. Tried-and-true Noro aficionados will find lots of enjoyable process knitting here. If you're a Noro newbie, it's time to jump in with one of the many shawl, wrap, scarf, hat or mitten patterns that pair the traditional Noro tonals with the newer singular-color Silk Garden Solo.

▼ **Yarn Happy: 30 Traditional Norwegian Designs for Modern Knit & Crochet**
by Turid Lindeland
Sellers Publishing; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1416245636

Even more proof that knitting inspiration can hide in the unlikeliest of places: Turid Lindeland found hers in the crumbling walls of an old hotel in Norway that she and her husband bought to renovate. That discovered object—a traditional Norwegian sock design from 1887—became



the central motif for all of the projects in this book. Most of the 30 designs are for home décor (there are also patterns

for one sweater and two sock styles), so if you love to knit for the process and presentation of it rather than for the wearing of the finished object, Lindeland's blankets and pillows provide a sophisticated take on the traditional. The motif is charted throughout and further adapted for projects intended to stylishly revive furniture (stools, club chairs and the like) that requires a bit more finishing (installing a zipper or lining). The cool glacier blues, stone-wall grays and garden-rose pinks of Lindeland's color palette make this a relaxing page-turner even if you never cast on a stitch.

▼ **Baby and Me Knits**
By Celeste Young
Sellers Publishing; \$19.95
ISBN: 978-1416245414

Each of Young's five design themes (Sweet Berries, Bright Stripes, and Ropes and Rings, among them)



features three patterns for baby and one companion piece for Mom. All four patterns within a

theme are worked in the same yarn and stitch motif, but the designs are anything but Mini Me: For one theme, what is a petite pullover, blanket and booties trio for baby gets worked up as a streamlined lace-edged shawl for Mom. Full-color photos that demonstrate even the simplest techniques, along with larger-than-usual stitch charts, make this a good choice for a beginner knitter—as well as a new mom (like the author!), grandma or aunt who may not have picked up the needles for a while and who now has a happy new reason to knit.

▼ **Cute Critter Crochet**
By Maki Oomaci
Race Point Publishing; \$21.99
ISBN: 978-1631060021

If you're a knitter who enviously oohs and ahhs at every amigurumi picture on Instagram, this book may prompt you to finally pick up the hook yourself. Maki Oomaci's 30 critters and their accessories—



including Mama and Baby Roo, Little Seal, Fluffy Alpaca and Polar Bear—are, as billed, utterly adorable. But what really might convince you to crochet one yourself is the illustrated and written information that dispels any doubt you may have about what to do when—from how to execute a basic single crochet to a more intricate double decrease. The assembly tips and list of tools also include step-by-step photos, and each design is charted and written to guide both visual and verbal learners to a finished object to post on their own Instagram feeds.

▼ **Mini Knitted Woodland: Cute & Easy Knitting Patterns for Animals, Birds and Other Forest Life**
By Sachiyo Ishii
Search Press; \$15.95
ISBN: 978-1782210689

After going on safari in her first book, Ishii returns to miniaturize the fauna and flora of her English home, popu-

lating a patchwork forest floor with tiny hares, badgers, birds and the like. Designed with an astonishing amount of zoological accuracy—gnomes and toadstool houses aside—the 33 cute patterns are deceptively simple to knit. Each animal



is worked flat and seamed, omitting the need for fiddly dpps; details like

stag antlers and two-color pom-pom skunk tails give each design plenty of character. Great for beginners, the book opens with a helpful primer on tiny toy making, including step-by-step photos of essential techniques such as seaming and embroidery. But the real treat here is the pattern photos, which are lovingly staged with miniature scenery that transports you straight to Ishii's fairy-tale land.

BESTSELLER WATCH

Here's what topped the bestseller lists the third week of March 2016:

Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

1. *Knitlandia*, by Clara Parkes (Stewart, Tabori & Chang)
2. *Refined Knits*, by Jennifer Wood (Interweave Press/F+W)
4. *Knitting Ephemera*, by Carol J. Sulcoski (Sixth&Spring Books)
5. *New Directions in Sock Knitting*, by Ann Budd (Interweave/F+W)
7. *A Coloring Book for Knitters*, by Ann Shayne (Chenille Press)
8. *750 Knitting Stitches* (Pavilion Books)

Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

1. *A to Z Crochet* (Martingale & Co.)
5. *Star Wars Crochet*, by Lucy Collin (Thunder Bay Press)
9. *Edward's Menagerie: Over 40 Soft and Snuggly Toy Animal Crochet Patterns*, by Kerry Lord (David & Charles)
10. *Crochet One-Skein Wonders*, by J. Durant & E. Eckman (Storey)

Barnes & Noble Needlework & Fiber Arts List

1. *Circular Knitting Workshop*, by Margaret Radcliffe (Storey)
2. *Knitting Pearls*, edited by Ann Hood (W.W. Norton)
4. *A Life in Stitches*, by Rachael Herron (Chronicle Books)
5. *Cast On, Bind Off*, by Leslie Ann Bestor (Storey)
6. *750 Knitting Stitches* (Pavilion Books)

YARN FORWARD

Soft and woolly, quick to stitch and very Instagram-able (nothing earns #nofilter like a fluffy WIP), big-gauge roving yarns are as irresistible to newbies as they are to fiber maven.



Freia Fine Handpaints Ombré Super Bulky

Specs: 36 colorways; 100% wool; 87yds/150g

Gauge: 8 sts = 4" on U.S. 17 needles

Distinctions: In Ombré Super Bulky, Knitwhits' inspired color combinations meet a yarn base made for instant gratification. Pre-felted with a process that minimizes pilling while retaining softness and loft, the tenaciously rounded strand produces exceptional stitch definition.

Projects: The put-up offers plenty of yardage for one-skein accessories, which pair well with the ombré dyes. The effect looks especially sweet in hats, which get built-in contrasting pompoms, and it sings when crocheted.

SINGLES ONLY

By Christina Behnke

Malabrigo Yarn Rasta

Specs: 39 colorways; 100% merino wool; 90yds/150g

Gauge: 8–10 sts = 4" on U.S. 13–15 needles

Distinctions: The renowned Uruguayan merino is writ large in a gently undulating strand spun to effect a rustic 2-ply appearance. While fiber this soft tends to pill, Rasta is lightly felted, creating a hand that's durable yet supple and satin-smooth.

Projects: When Malabrigo's "watercolor" hand-dyes meet such an outsize canvas, a single stitch can flaunt an entire spectrum. Drop- and slip-stitch patterns make the most of this effect.



Plymouth Yarn Co. Galway Roving

Specs: 19 colors; 100% Highland wool; 54yds/100g

Gauge: 10 sts = 4" on U.S. 15 needles

Distinctions: Highland wool is a natural fit for singles-spun yarns: As exemplified in Galway Roving, the Corriedale/merino hybrid marries long-staple luster and strength with fluffy-fiber halo and spring. The fiber's natural shimmer boosts the vivid brights and refines the neutral shades.

Projects: The spin is slightly more perky than its counterparts', creating a tubular strand that pops in pattern stitches like cables, lace and especially ribbing.





Tahki Yarns/Tahki-Stacy Charles Big Montana

Specs: 4 natural colors; 100% virgin wool roving; 71yds/100g

Gauge: 7 sts = 4" on U.S. 17 needles

Distinctions: Big Montana is a fleece lover's dream: spongy, pillowy, eco-friendly unprocessed wool. The tubular strand offers plump definition to stitches, which will eventually develop a textured patina.

Projects: The gentle spin puts it on the tender side—stick to blunt needles—though it does resist breakage, allowing for simple cabling. Try striping with bulky-weight little sister Montana for a jumbo take on condo knitting.



Cascade Yarns Magnum

Specs: 58 colors; 100% Peruvian Highland wool; 123yds/250g

Gauge: 6–8 sts = 4" on U.S. 15–17 needles

Distinctions: Crossed between long-staple Corriedale and bouncy merino, Highland wool is key to Magnum's buoyant rounded construction and subtle sheen, despite its loose spin. The prismatic, dyed-in-the-wool heathered shades look especially rich.

Projects: The bountiful put-up practically puts it into "bump" territory—one skein yields a generous scarf or cowl. We're inclined to knit a quick, cozy blanket that will develop a downy surface over time.



Prism Valhalla

Specs: Hundreds of colorways; 100% fine merino wool; 199yds/100g

Gauge: 18 sts = 4" on U.S. 8 needles

Distinctions: The *fine* distinction shows: It's hard to believe that Valhalla, satin-soft and luminescent, isn't a silk blend. The firm spin makes it less lofty than typical singles-spun yarns but adds wonderful bounce—and resilience against inevitable fuzz.

Projects: Fiber this soft begs to hug the neck. Choose one of Prism's signature Ikat-dyed colorways and try out the Magic Number planned pooling technique in a simple cowl.

Blue Sky Fibers Bulky

Specs: 24 colors; 50% alpaca/50% wool; 45yds/100g

Gauge: 8 sts = 4" on U.S. 15 needles

Distinctions: While roving wool alone can look rugged, the alpaca content in our list's sole blend imparts a pearlescent luster to the lofty strand; knit or crocheted, it acquires a creamy, soft-focus finish. Projects also boast the benefit of alpaca's toasty warmth.

Projects: Cushy and kitten-soft, Bulky is equally prone to shedding, so save it for luxurious, soft-wearing accessories like polar-princess hats, cowls and cuffs.



**yarn reviews
continue on
page 18**

SINGLES ONLY

Imperial Yarn Native Twist

Specs: 29 colors; 100% wool; 150yds/113g

Gauge: 12 sts = 4" on U.S. 11 needles

Distinctions: Observe the versatility of Columbia fleece: spongy and springy in multiple plies, it assumes a dry, cottony hand in singles-spun Native Twist. What it lacks in elasticity it makes up for in smooth, crisp texture and rustically heathered shades.

Projects: Positioned at the lower end of the bulky-gauge spectrum—and comparatively lightweight—Native Twist is great for garments, especially hard-wearing outerwear. The even spin renders beautiful lace.

Brown Sheep Co. Burly Spun

Specs: 44 colors; 100% wool; 132yds/226g

Gauge: 10 sts = 4" on U.S. 13 needles

Distinctions: "Singles-spun roving" and "workhorse yarn" don't often share the same sentence, but Burly Spun defies expectations. Its springy spin and smooth hand make for a remarkably versatile yarn with excellent stitch definition and durability.

Projects: We mean versatile! Take advantage of the prodigious put-up in a one-skein scarf or cowl; apply its relatively light weight in a quick-to-knit jacket; or whip up heavy-duty felted housewares.

Schoppel Wolle/Skacel Collection Pur

Specs: 19 eco-friendly colorways; 100% merino wool; 164yds/100g

Gauge: 12 sts = 4" on U.S. 10–10.75 needles

Distinctions: Unlike other unspun roving—which, despite its distinctive look, has an uninviting tendency to break—Pur is firmly felted using Schoppel's patented technique. Though inelastic, the strong strand harnesses merino's luster, creating a sleek, even yarn.

Projects: The recommended gauge yields a loose-knit fabric ideal for drapey wraps and garments—the finish prevents the usual pilling. The strand is also a tidy match for crochet.

Ella Rae/KFI Lush Merino

Specs: 22 colorways; 100% wool; 66yds/100g

Gauge: 7–11 sts = 4" on U.S. 11–17 needles

Distinctions: *Lush Merino* says it all: buttery yet toothy non-superwash wool—which will develop a halo with wear—is spun into a dense, rounded strand with the occasional wobble, which lends a rustic quality to the hand-painted and semisolid colorways. The hand is pure luscious velvet.

Projects: The stout spin suits a wide range of gauges, from structured (think wind-blocking hats) to drapey (à la chunky cowls).



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Building on 40 Years of Success

I am honored to join TNNA as its new executive director. With more than a decade of trade show experience, I am excited to work with the board to help TNNA meet and exceed its goals for 2016 and beyond. Our strategic plan includes fresh, innovative ideas and initiatives that will serve our members and our industry. I was able to meet so many of you at the winter trade show in San Diego, and I loved hearing about your businesses and your insights into the yarn industry. It's my commitment to you to continue to listen, to be responsive and to move our association forward.

This year we're pleased to be launching the TNNA Business Webinar series. Building on the success of our Building Better Business classes at the winter and spring trade shows, these one-hour webinars will be led by industry experts and are designed to help you develop and grow your business. Webinar topics will be business-specific to retailers but will benefit everyone in the needlearts industry. The series will address topics such as leveraging the

industry survey in your business newsletters, marking trends, social media, maximizing your industry relationships and more. Find the full schedule and registration information at tnna.org. The cost is \$30 for members and \$60 for non-members.

TNNA is also pleased to announce The State of Specialty NeedleArts 2016—the essential business tool for our industry. The survey provides baseline industry and consumer data and explores important current topics including social media use and preferences, consumer purchase decision making, spending at needlearts stores, online and non-traditional retailers, wholesale/retail communications, and the blurring of retail and wholesale operations. This triennial study will help you write a business plan, secure loans, plan successful marketing initiatives, develop new products and services, and work with business partners. Produced by Hart Business Research, it includes the results of 2016 surveys of U.S. needlearts consumers, retailers and wholesalers; market sizes and growth;

and quarterly trends. TNNA has released study components, which you can find at tnna.org/Survey2016. The study is free to TNNA members.

Attendees at the summer trade show will hear India Hart Wood, president of Hart Business Research, present key findings from the 2016 surveys. You will have an opportunity to ask questions and participate in group discussions. If you haven't registered yet, head over to tnna.org/summershow to sign up.

These one-of-a-kind business resources can help TNNA members grow their businesses. Join today at tnna.org so you can take advantage of all that the organization has to offer. It's a privilege to be working with an amazing team of people as we build on TNNA's 40 years of success. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events. The summer show is June 11–13 at our new location in Washington, D.C., the Walter E. Washington Convention Center. Our 2017 winter show will be held in San Jose, California, at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center, January 21–23.

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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The Millennial Challenge

We are all challenged with the task of engaging future generations if our industry is to grow and thrive. That means reaching that much-talked-about age group, Millennials. Roughly encompassing those born between the early 1980s and early 2000s, the group is massive. A 2014 article in *The New York Times* predicted that by 2020, Millennials will account for one third of the adult population of the U.S., surpassing Baby Boomers.

Research has provided us with broad generalizations: Millennials, raised by helicopter parents, are in no rush to leave home or get married; they are highly educated but have overwhelming amounts of college debt; and they are almost always connected virtually to their network of friends. But we have to dig deeper to find what might turn them on to knitting and crochet.

CYC's market research started in our own office, with our communications and social media director, Dionne Rockwell, a recent college grad who is definitely "networked." Rockwell referred to a trend presentation by Philip Fimmano of

Trend Union at the 2016 Craft and Hobby Show as the best overview of today's creative Millennials. "Fimmano noted that Millennials are more than one archetype. We are continually reinventing ourselves," she points out, "and we are constantly exploring new medias. Tactility is very important to us."

In our conversations, certain words and phrases kept coming up, including "personalization" and "individuality." Rockwell says, "Through social media, we are encouraged to be who we are, to be unique. And that's just great for us, because being a maker is one of the many ways people can achieve this 'unicorn' status. If you are making the things you surround yourself with in your home and beyond, you are creating a visual expression of who you are. You can be one of a kind."

What's important to Millennials is being involved in every aspect of the creative process. Rockwell explains, "The process might begin with seeing an item on Pinterest, then gathering the materials, creating the item, showing it off,

and being able to say 'I made this' when someone asks, 'Where did you get that?'" She stresses that "creation" could be something as simple as adding a tassel to a store-bought bag.

The current platform of choice for Millennials is Instagram, and Rockwell is introducing a new CYC Instagram project this year that combines many of the ideas she talked to us about, called Instagram Me. The spokespeople featured in the campaign are in their twenties and are involved with a variety of crafts. The emphasis will be on doable DIY projects, with possible links to a blog that provides step-by-step instructions for making the projects. "The biggest challenge is showing new consumers that anyone can make these projects," says Rockwell.

Her takeaway, and ours, is that while social media is an essential way for Millennials to get and share ideas, they are much more than their online personas. Talk to them. Find out what's important to them. Even consider hiring younger people for your store—all excellent ways to engage this influential generation.

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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Yarn Group and You

When I became TNNA's Yarn Group chair last year, I vowed to do everything in my power to help TNNA be the best it can be. Along with my business partner, Kate Gagnon Osborn, I distribute The Fibre Co. yarns in North America. I've designed patterns, written books, taught at retreats and more. But I began my career working in a yarn shop in Chicago and then in Philadelphia, so retail yarn sales is where my understanding of the industry began. The depth and breadth of my knowledge about the yarn industry helps me to see things from multiple perspectives.

TNNA exists to support independent and small businesses involved in the needlearts—everyone from knitwear designers to wholesale distributors. TNNA's dedication to independent businesses is what sets it apart from the Craft Yarn Council and the Craft and Hobby Association. Wholesalers are here because they recognize the value in having independent, community-

based businesses carry their products; retailers are here because they want to provide their customers with the best quality products; designers and teachers are here because they are our conduit to reaching and inspiring knitters new and old.

My goal as chairperson of the largest product segment group within TNNA is to grow our industry and our trade organization—with your help. We are tasked with the responsibility of fostering and mentoring others so that our craft, and our livelihood, flourishes. I would ask that we all keep Yarn Group's mission—to "create awareness and appreciation of the craft, and encourage partnerships between members of the community"—at the forefront of the work we do, because there is room for everyone.

To that point, I ask you to think about what TNNA and, more specifically, Yarn Group mean to you. What is your role in the industry? What are you doing to keep it strong? Who mentored you along your path, and how can you mentor

our future leaders? We all have gifts to bring to the table, and small businesses are the innovators, trendsetters and community builders. We must reach out to consumers in a compelling way, encouraging sales at local yarn shops and working to sign on new TNNA retail, wholesale and creative services members.

Yarn Group and TNNA are volunteer-run, and as the saying goes, "Many hands make light work." So I ask each of you to contact someone in your community—a shop owner, designer, sales rep, manufacturer, supplier or maker—and ask him or her to join us at Yarn Group. The more hands we have, the more we can build. The more minds we put to work, the more innovative our strategies.

We hope to see you in Washington, D.C., on June 11 at the TNNA trade show. (Education begins on June 9.) Please join us at the Yarn Group meeting to learn more about the many ways you can get involved. For more details, visit tnna.org/group/YarnGroup.

TNNA's Yarn Group is an industry-encompassing group that promotes the growth of the yarn industry, creates awareness and appreciation of the craft, and encourages partnerships among members of the community.

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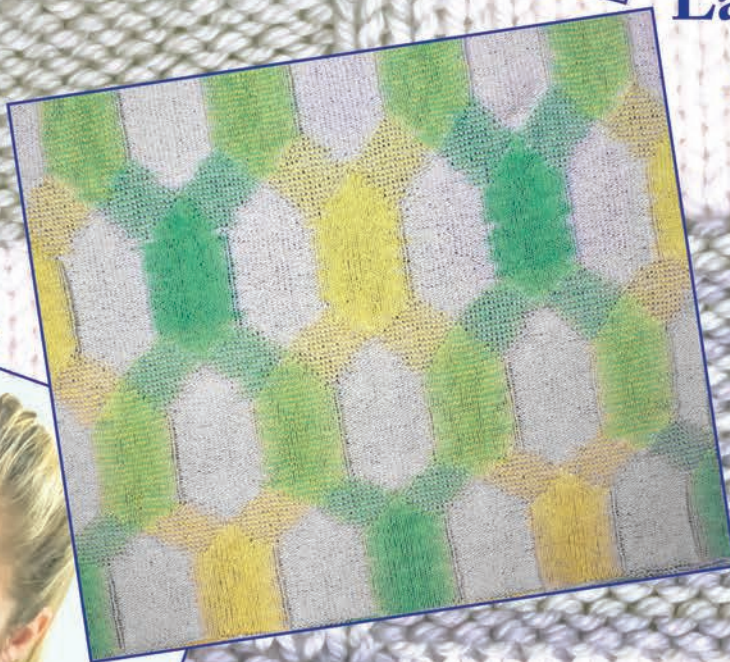
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SPINNING & WEAVING GROUP

BY CONSTANCE HALL, SPINZILLA PROJECT MANAGER



A Monster Event

Three years ago, The National NeedleArts Association's Spinning and Weaving Group launched Spinzilla, a one-week spin-all-you-can event. Since that time, 3,600 spinners from all 50 states and 14 countries have participated, collectively spinning more than 10.4 million miles of yarn and raising more than \$36,000 for the NeedleArts Mentoring Program (NAMP), a project of the Helping Hands Foundation.

Appealing to both industry professionals and hobbyists alike, NAMP creates kits for children's groups to introduce kids to new crafts, teach thinking skills and plant the seeds of interest in the fiber arts. The funds raised by Spinzilla have allowed NAMP to add spinning and weaving kits to the already impressive numbers of kits for knitting, crochet, needlepoint and cross stitch.

To be a host of a Spinzilla team—this year's event takes place from October 3–9—you must be a member of both TNNA and SWG. SWG

members are teachers, guilds, designers, yarn manufacturers, spinning and weaving equipment manufacturers, publishers and retail shop owners. One of the best things about this event is that it puts SWG members on a level playing field: for instance, a teacher of spinning can pit herself against a major loom manufacturer.

Spinzilla also works as a bridge between TNNA and consumers who may not be aware of our primary mission: to grow interest in spinning and weaving. Over the past three years, many spinners have joined SWG after participating in Spinzilla as part of a group, deciding afterward that they'd like to host their own team. Others appreciate knowing that their entry fees are benefiting a good cause. It's a win-win, for team hosts, retailers and wholesalers of spinning and weaving supplies, NAMP and TNNA. And for spinners too, of course, because we get to do what we love best.

On that first morning of Spinzilla, we sit down and get to work: maybe on our wheels at home or at our local yarn shop. We take our spindles with us as we go about our day, spinning during lunch or in the stands at our kids' sporting events. Last year, a team from Bolivia spun while tending sheep and working crops. Ten minutes here and there add up to tremendous yardage, showing us all how mighty we are when we join together. We meet our teammates, share our love of spinning and learn more about our team hosts. We also shop—before, during and after—for fiber to spin now and to replace what we've already spun.

Thanks to TNNA, SWG and our sponsors, we are back for year four. Read more about the event and find instructions for hosting a team on the FAQs page at spinzilla.org. Team registration begins on June 21. Email info@spinzilla.org to find out how you can join the fun.

The goal of the Spinning & Weaving Group is to ensure a vibrant marketplace by promoting the joys of hand spinning and weaving. Learn more at www.tnna.org/page/SWGHome.



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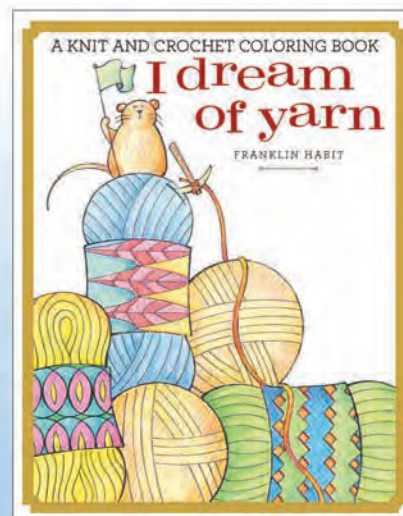
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Get Creative 6

Briggs & Little



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Friends,

2016 marks a milestone in the history of Briggs & Little. Since 1857 (159 years) there has been a woolen mill on our location in Harvey, New Brunswick, which became Briggs & Little Woolen Mill on June 7, 1916. My son Michael (Mike) is now my business partner, making him a fourth generation owner.

In our 100th year as Briggs & Little, we are shifting our focus to social media to keep customers abreast of what we are doing (a totally new chapter for us). For this reason, we will no longer be attending trade shows. Rather, we will be updating our present and future customers through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest. Thank you to the TNNA staff and attendees who have supported and visited our booth over the past 19 years. It has been our pleasure to meet so many of you face to face.

We are still in business, we are still at the same location we have been for all these years, and we still offer the same quick, reliable friendly service you have come to expect from us. This will not change.

For USA customers, orders will be cleared through customs on Wednesdays and ship via USPS Priority Mail. Orders must be received by noon (AST) on Tuesday to allow for customs clearance on Wednesday, and are usually delivered on Friday or Saturday.

If you are visiting or passing through New Brunswick, please stop in and have a tour of our mill. If you've never been, you'll be pleasantly surprised at our operation.

To keep in touch with what's happening at Briggs & Little, please feel free to *friend, follow, tweet, message* or just phone us at 1-800-561-YARN(9276). You can still contact us through snail mail at our address below. If you are more tactile and would like true yarn samples, send us your mailing address and we'll send them to you.

Again, THANK YOU for your past support, and we wish everyone a very successful show in Washington, DC.

Sincerely,

John & Mike Little

And all of our staff at Briggs & Little

Come See the Show!

Known for its educational offerings, The Knitting Guild Association's 2016 conference in North Charleston, South Carolina, will feature topnotch classes (July 13–16) and shopping (15–16), all planned with TKGA members in mind.

Following last year's event, attendees were asked what they hoped for from future gatherings. The most frequent request was for more classes directly tied to TKGA's highly respected Master Hand Knitting Program. This year's attendees will enjoy an abundance of classes presented by shining stars of the knitting world.

The Master Hand Knitting Program is divided into three levels. Candidates for each level delve deeply into a variety of skills and are required to complete specific projects and written work. Level 1 covers basic skills including gauge, increases, decreases, simple cables and lace, simple color changes and an introduction to pattern writing. The required project is a mitten, which shows the ability to follow a pattern, work to

gauge, knit circularly, and make increases and decreases. The written work assignment is a blocking report. Master Hand Knitters teaching classes that apply to Level 1 at the conference are Beth Brown-Reinsel, Leslie Gonzalez and Binka Schwan.

Level 2 builds on the skills in Level 1, with more advanced cable and lace swatches that also require the candidate to write patterns. The main focus is on finishing, and the projects are a Fair Isle wristlet and a vest. The written work is a history-of-knitting report. To help cement all-important finishing skills, I will be there to teach two days of Finishing with Confidence. Margaret Fisher will teach Advanced Seaming and Superb Seams; Leslie Gonzalez offers Color Techniques Test Drive; and Heather Storta will teach A Sampling of Short Rows, all of which apply to Level 2.

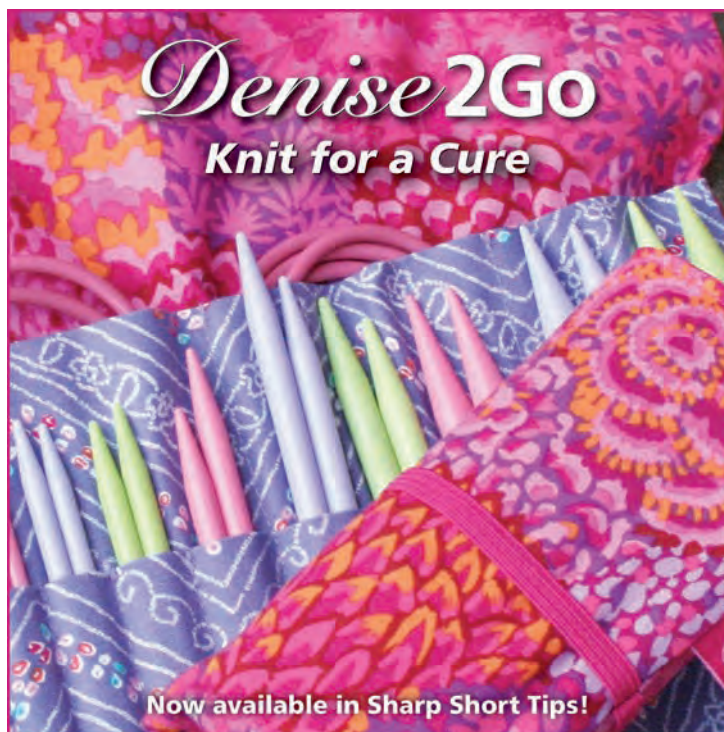
Level 3 culminates with a variety of cast-on and bind-off techniques; diverse stitch patterns including herringbone, brioche, smocking, entre-lac, elongated stitches, mosaic stitches, slipped

stitches, duplicate stitch, intarsia; and charting. Required projects are original designs of a hat and a sweater, one of which must be Aran and one traditional stranded. The final written work entails book reviews and a report on a traditional knitting technique. Classes from Beth Brown-Reinsel, Margaret Fisher, Leslie Gonzalez and Heather Storta will all support the rigorous requirements of Level 3.

In addition to traditional classes, perennial favorite On Your Way to the Masters Day has been expanded for the first time to include topics for Master Hand Knitting Program graduates. Plans are also underway for the ever-popular Yarn Tasting and Brilliance Bar, and new Master Knitters will receive their pins for achieving mastery of myriad knitting skills.

Every year, TKGA aims to entertain and educate. This year's conference promises to fulfill that intent. To secure exhibit space, contact Kareena Gibson at kgibson@offinger.com. To register to attend, go to www.TKGA.com.

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




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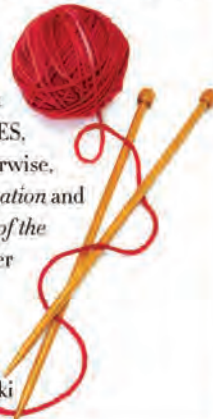
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Honoring the Past, Looking to the Future

In early 2011, seventeen years after the Crochet Guild of America was founded, CGOA board member Cari Clement unveiled to fellow guild members a new project: the establishment of a hall of fame that would recognize and celebrate those who have made a lasting contribution to the craft. All guild members were invited that year to nominate the first honoree, who would be welcomed into the new hall that summer at the Chain Link conference. Coming as a surprise to no one, the guild chose industry pioneer and legend Jean Leinhauser—designer, author, instructor, founder of both LeisureArts and the American School of Needlework—as its first hall of fame inductee. Sadly, Leinhauser died only weeks before the ceremony was held. She was inducted posthumously, and the board voted to name the CGOA Crochet Hall of Fame for her to honor her memory and the many significant contributions she made to the crochet industry.

Just as they were that first year, CGOA

members are invited to nominate each year individuals who have had a substantial, long-term impact on crochet. Past honorees include designer/author/instructor and former CGOA president Rita Weiss (2012), designer and author Margaret Hubert (2013) and CGOA founder Gwen Blakely Kinsler, who entered the hall in 2014 and whose written history of the Crochet Guild can be found at crochet.org.

The most recent inductee is popular designer Lily Chin, whose many contributions to the craft are well known. Chin is a highly energetic and enthusiastic ambassador for the crochet community. She's one of the world's fastest crocheters, has authored numerous books and taught countless online classes, is a sought-after teacher at national and international conferences and shows, has appeared on television with Martha Stewart, and made David Letterman a sweater in one hour during the filming of his talk show. Chin has created patterns for well-known Seventh Avenue designers including Ralph

Lauren, Vera Wang, Diane von Furstenberg and Isaac Mizrahi. A native of New York City, she has been involved in various aspects of the fashion industry since the age of 13.

At her award ceremony at CGOA's annual conference in San Diego last July, Chin was roasted—at her request—by fellow crocheters, and she treated the crowd to a highly entertaining recap of her history in the industry. Her slideshow was an amazing retrospective of many of the garments and costumes she has created over the years. Chin is an irrepressible force, and we are fortunate that she chose a career in the yarn industry, and crochet in particular. We enjoyed taking a journey into her past and look forward to seeing what the future will bring.

The 2016 inductee (unnamed at press time) will be honored at the annual CGOA conference, in North Charleston, South Carolina, from July 13–16. Make plans to attend. We'd love to see you there.

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



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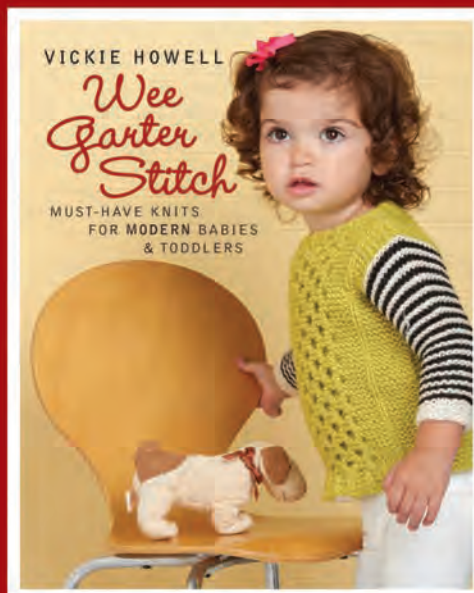
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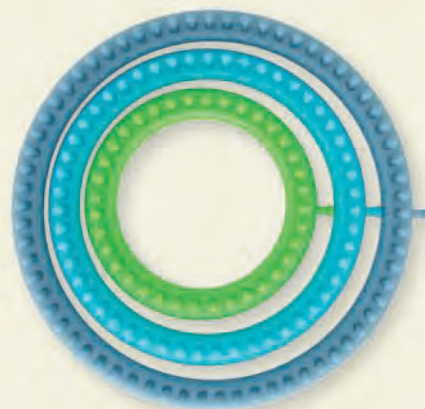
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Directory Assistance

Your page in Ravelry's free yarn shop directory—the world's largest online directory of yarn shops—is an important aspect of your shop's presence on Ravelry. Getting connected to your directory page will allow you to edit your shop's information and upload photos. A directory page with information filled out and photos added can help to show customers new and old that your store is welcoming and active.

If you aren't listed in the shop directory or aren't connected to your shop's existing page, visit ravelry.com/yarnshops and our Shop Wizard, built specifically for LYS owners and staff, will walk you through the process, help you search our directory to see if your shop is already listed, and even allow you to sign up for our In-Store Pattern Sales program.

Once you're connected to your shop page, check to see that your address (and other geographical information) is listed correctly. A correct address with a map on the directory page means that your shop will show up in location-based searches as a "nearby shop"

for users looking on the main Yarns tab, and through our Road Trip Planner, found at ravelry.com/roadtrips, which allows Ravelry users to enter a starting and ending destination for a trip and the number of miles they are willing to detour to find yarn shops along the route.

After ensuring that your address is correct, I recommend taking a look at the other information on the page. Have you included all the information you'd like to share? We have fields for your shop's hours and amenities, including wheelchair access, parking, seating and free wireless Internet. You can add your contact information or even link to your shop's Facebook page. We also provide a notes field, which you can use to publicize special events, list upcoming classes, link to your website's classes page or get the word out about a regular craft night.

You'll see a photos tab at the top of the page—click on that and you can add photos by uploading them from your computer or importing them from your website or a photo-hosting site like Flickr or Photobucket. Adding photos to

your shop's directory page will help give users a feel for your store and entice them to visit.

If you have an active LYS Ravelry ad, we'll add a "yarns" tab to your directory page with the same yarns you selected for your ad. We update the list whenever you update your ad, so this is a great way to show users the yarns you carry. With our LYS logo ads, you choose the yarns your shop carries, and we will show your logo in a "buy this yarn" box—shown throughout the site wherever yarns are referenced—to local users within a 60-mile radius of your shop. LYS ads link right back to your shop's directory page, another reason to keep them up to date.

Your customers can also be connected to your LYS directory page as Patrons, which happens if they note your shop as the place in which they purchased a yarn they're adding to their Ravelry stash. Encouraging your customers to enter their purchases from you on Ravelry, thus linking to your shop in the "purchased at" field, is another way to show that you're running a busy, vibrant LYS.

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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Categorically Speaking

Assigning categories to all of your inventory will allow you to better grasp what is and isn't selling.

BY KIMBERLY AGBAYANI

The key to a thriving, profitable store lies in managing what comes in and what goes out. Being aware of average days on hand and keeping inventory at appropriate levels is at the core of a shop's sustainability. The method by which we refine our inventory management is called Category Management, which makes tracking the thousands of items in our stores manageable. The primary aim of Category Management is to maximize sales and profit while satisfying customers' demands. At the same time, it divides your stock into manageable sections, from which a perfect mix can be achieved.

Much like determining appropriate days on hand, yarn stores face a particular challenge in that their categories are complex and interlaced. To illustrate that complexity, think of the yarns in your shop as having at least four layers: weight, fiber content, processing method and color; other possible considerations are ply, margin and producer. The care with which you define your categories will impact the ease of their utilization, and how effective they will be.

Once your categories have been established, process individual reports of products within a category so you can compare them. You'll use the information you find regarding sales, margin and supply to plan the best product mix for your store.

Sales

Comparing sales within a category is perhaps the simplest point of comparison. Whatever your reports reveal sells the most is what you keep in your store, making certain that you have appropriate pars (the ideal number of a product on hand). Whatever doesn't sell needs to move out to make room for something else.

A shop owner should realize that every time a non-selling item is repositioned or remerchandised, labor dollars are lost. This skews the actual/net margin of a product, and you continue to pay taxes on it while it is in your inventory. To be clear, margin is a flexible term that only becomes real when a product is sold.

Margin

Understanding margin and its impact within a category is a little more involved. A category is a great

microcosm and can give a better understanding of margin in general. It is important to understand the impact of margin on your store's long-term sustainability. Keystone for the yarn industry is 50 percent gross margin, which is a good baseline for a target margin.

An example: Say you process a report on DK-weight yarns and find that in the past month you sold 100 items in this category with five DK yarns. The report shows that 25 were sold at 51 percent margin; 32 at 50.5 percent margin; 36 at 50 percent; 2 at 42 percent; and 5 at 38 percent. This gives you a blended actual margin of 49.65 percent for that sales period. These figures illustrate that even if you sell just a few low-margin items, you can miss your target margin. Conversely, by selling a few more high-margin items, you can balance out the numbers. Blended margin for a category should ideally be at target or above.

What to do with this information? Spend your merchandising energy (store samples, trunk shows and the like) on high-margin items and combine high-margin items with low-margin items with a clear merchandising strategy. It is important to understand the margin mix you have within a category and remediate as necessary. You may be willing to take a hit in margin to support a small local producer, but be aware of how it impacts your category. If at all possible, propose projects that combine a low-margin item with a higher-margin item to mitigate the impact.

The goal is to ensure that your high-margin yarns are your biggest sellers. This may mean that you slightly increase the margin of other items within a category to balance out your margin to reach your desired minimum. Continuing with this example, 0.35 percent off from 50 may not seem like much, but it could be enough to give a hard-working employee a well-deserved raise.

Supply

Supply is a factor in your categories as well. Hand-dyed yarns come in an amazing array of colors, but many are dyed to order, which can mean long delays in order fulfillment. Some yarns are available in smaller quantities and may have regular manufacturer out-of-stocks. When evaluating a category regarding supply, you are thinking about the blend of supply availability. If all of your sock-weight yarn

is hand-dyed, you may want to consider expanding your selection to a few that are more readily available to avoid gaps in supply. Standing orders for yarn bases can help with hand-dyed-yarn suppliers.

As you incorporate this inventory management tool, adjust your category designations if necessary—it's easy to make things more complicated than they need to be. Arrange the categories in a way that will best meet your needs, so you are given the most useful information for effectively managing your inventory.

Creating Your Categories

Following are a few examples of categories you could use to evaluate your inventory. This is intended as a jumping-off point. Integrate your categories into your POS system so that you can easily pull category sales reports. First, establish over-arching categories, much like Kingdoms in scientific classifications. Designate these categories with your store in mind.

- **YARN** can be broken down into weight, fiber content, processing methods (i.e., superwash, farm yarn, hand-dyed, hand-spun). You can make your categories as simple or as complex as you desire based on how precise you want or need them to be.
- **NOTIONS** may not need very many sub-categories, but they could come in handy if you should want to run a report on all of your stitch markers or scissors, for example.
- **NEEDLES** break down easily into sub-categories: circulars, interchangeable, dpns, straights, etc.
- **BOOKS/PERIODICALS** divide nicely into knitting, crochet, spinning, hand-dyeing, other craft, magazines/journals.
- **GIFTS:** Depending on your store, this may be a very small category or a very large one—subdivide as you feel it is necessary to match your product mix.

Kimberly Agbayani is the Operations and Inventory Manager at Tolt Yarn and Wool in Carnation, Washington.

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Sales (Tax) Pitch

They say nothing's certain but death and taxes.

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

If you're a vendor or shop owner who's had to grapple with state sales tax, "certain" is not the first word that comes to mind. Unlike many other countries, the United States has not adopted a uniform federal sales tax; instead, each state (and, frequently, localities within a state) are free to impose their own sales tax requirements. The result? A patchwork of state and local legislation that can bewilder a small business owner. Depending on where you do business, you may have to file tax returns for or make quarterly payments to multiple states in which you do business.

Exemptions and Exceptions

Each jurisdiction that imposes sales tax has its own unique, and often baffling, rules for which products, services and types of transactions are subject to sales tax. In Iowa, for example, pumpkins are not subject to sales tax but inedible gourds are; in Texas, bingo equipment is exempt from sales tax; and a bagel is taxed in New York if you eat in, but not if you get it to go. You'll need to check to determine which types of goods are taxed and which items are exceptions (often called "exempt goods").

Yarn industry members should take a look at the rules for clothing, often included in the category of "necessities." Because they are considered essential rather than luxury goods, food and clothing are exempt from sales tax in certain jurisdictions and under certain circumstances—Minnesota, New Jersey and Pennsylvania all exempt clothing from state sales tax. In addition to ready-to-wear items, these states also exempt items that are used to make or repair clothing—yarn, fabric, buttons and zippers, for example.

To make it more confusing, those same items are taxable if they're intended to make items other than clothing (say, the yarn will be used to knit an afghan and the buttons will go on a tote bag). That puts a shop owner in the difficult position of keeping track of whether yarn or buttons are being purchased to make clothing, in which case no tax need be collected, or used for something else, in which case tax must be collected. Many yarn shops assume that their materials are going to be used for clothing since the majority of their products are, but each shop owner has to figure out what is feasible and what she is comfortable with.

Keep in mind that other items you sell—tape measures, knitting needles, crochet hooks, instructional books—may be taxable no matter what they

are used for. You'll have to check with your state and/or local tax agency to determine exactly which items in your shop are taxable, add the appropriate distinctions to your cash register or POS system, and educate employees on how to ring up various items depending whether they are exempt or taxed.

No Bricks, No Bill?

For a long time, vendors who sold only via the Internet took the position that they need not pay sales tax in states or localities unless they had some type of physical location in the state. Small businesses protested that this gave online retailers a significant advantage. As of press time, no federal legislation regarding Internet sales tax has passed, although several states have enacted their own Internet sales tax laws, often dubbed "Amazon laws" after the giant e-tailer that inspired them.

So do sales via an Etsy store trigger an obliga-

tion, you invariably will be found to have enough of a connection to that place to be subject to its sales tax. (Indeed, in some locations, a business is required to register and obtain a license or certification prior to opening a business there, with that registration serving as the jurisdiction's notice that a new sales-tax payer has arrived.) Physical presence can be defined loosely; a warehouse or even a sales associate who is assigned to a territory in that locality is often sufficient a nexus to trigger sales-tax liability. Even if your presence in a state or municipality is sporadic, such as attending a single craft show or festival for a weekend, the sales-tax powers that be can consider that enough to create an obligation to pay tax to that state.

One of the most controversial issues today is whether simply selling your goods (including pdf patterns) to customers residing in another state is enough of a nexus to require payment of taxes

It's Too Taxing!

Making sense of complex tax schemes can be intimidating and stressful. Here are some tips to help you navigate:

- **Get more information about the process via the Small Business Administration's website, like this post on sales tax 101: www.sba.gov/blogs/sales-tax-101-small-business-owners-and-online-retailers.**
- **Consult your state's Department of Revenue or Taxation and find instructions, downloadable forms, tips, online registration and other key information. Then check the websites for all localities in which you do business.**
- **Financial software can help you determine and remit sales taxes, especially when dealing with multiple jurisdictions. Check your POS system for any features that can help.**
- **Don't hesitate to consult a competent tax adviser with experience in multi-state sales tax to ensure you're doing what you should.**

tion to pay and remit sales taxes in the states in which your customers live? Does simply traveling to another state's convention center or fairground for a weekend festival mean you have to submit sales tax to that state? What about downloaded pdf patterns via Ravelry?

Unfortunately, the answer to each of these questions is "maybe." In most U.S. jurisdictions, a concept called "nexus" decides whether a seller must pay sales tax in a particular state or locality. The term *nexus* refers to the seller's connection to the particular location, usually (but not always) shown when a business has a physical presence in the relevant territory.

If you have a retail shop or studio in a particular

location, you invariably will be found to have enough of a connection to that place to be subject to sales tax in the buyer's home state, and collect and remit those taxes if applicable.

Getting Down to Brass Tax(es)

Staying on top of your obligation to pay taxes can be a big job, but remaining in compliance with all applicable sales-tax regulations is a critical step in running your business, whether it's small or large, in one state or several.

Carol J. Sulcoski is an attorney in Philadelphia; she also is a knitting author, teacher, dyer and designer. Her book *Knitting Ephemera* was released this spring.



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That's the Ticket

How you display prices for your stock can help—or hurt—your sales.

When a customer picks up a skein of yarn, the first thing he or she wants to know is how much it costs. As a retailer, you decide early on how to communicate this information, but your priorities and practices might change over time. New technologies, changes in staffing, a store redecoration or even something as seemingly inconsequential as the purchase of a new shelf may lead you to reconsider your methods for making yarn prices known.

You most likely indicate yarn prices in one of two ways: by labeling individual skeins with a pricing gun or preprinted labels or by labeling the shelf or bin in which the yarn is displayed. Many stores use some combination of individual labeling and bulk labeling. In general, individual labeling is the clearest indicator for customers. No matter how well shelves or bins are marked, there is simply more potential for confusion than with individual stickers. This doesn't mean, however, that individual labeling is the best system for every shop.

Price It Out

Developing, maintaining and perfecting a price-labeling system is a question of balance—weighing multiple factors that are important to you and your shop. No single approach is right for every store, but these three general principles can help guide your decision:

- 1. CLARITY:** Ideally, there should never be any confusions about the price of an item. Not knowing the cost of something, and not wanting to ask, is a major reason people to put yarn back on the shelf. Prices should be clearly marked and visible.
- 2. CONSISTENCY:** The mental act of checking the cost of an item should be invisible to customers. In other words, they shouldn't notice the process of noticing the price. If labels—either on the skein or on the shelf—are consistent throughout the store, customers will quickly start digesting them in a single glance.
- 3. EFFICIENCY:** Whatever system you use, it should integrate as neatly as possible with your POS system, rather than adding an additional layer of clerical labor. Most importantly, it should not take your team away from higher-priority work.

There are a number of factors to consider in determining which system is best for you, your customers and your staff.

Legal requirements: First and foremost, determine whether laws in your state or county govern retail item pricing. Several U.S. states mandate item pricing, which means that a price must be clearly displayed and easily matched to the item for sale. Check with your local or state chamber of commerce if you aren't familiar with the retail pricing regulations in your area.

Resources: Price-marking individual skeins of yarn is labor intensive. Plenty of small retail businesses start out with the intention of marking each item individually but find it difficult to keep up with the task. If the manufacturer's suggested retail price changes and your skeins are labeled with the old prices, for example, you can find yourself saddled with a large and unexpected inventory project. If you have a large inventory and a small team, consistent bulk labeling on shelves or bins can free up everyone's time.

Shop space: Customers are more likely to have questions about prices when a shop uses bin or shelf pricing rather than individual labels. If the physical layout of your store means that customers often browse without a member of your staff in view, labeling individual skeins might be the more user-friendly approach. Moreover, if you have a lot of yarn but not a lot of space, shelf tags can visually clutter your shop. If, on the other hand, you have a fairly open layout, shelf tags or signs are easily

seen from some distance away and can add character to your displays. Happy Knits in Portland, Oregon, for example, uses a system of small, framed chalkboards and whiteboards that sit atop each shelf, communicating lots of important information and lending a charming feel to the space.

Shop culture: To be effective, bin or shelf tags require a store to keep its inventory tidy. If your shop tends toward chaotic Saturday afternoons filled with active, wandering browsers, you might find that yarn is misplaced more quickly than your

BY PAMELA WYNNE BUTLER

staff can sort it back into the correct bins or shelves. In that case, a price sticker on each skein can both clarify matters for shoppers and free up your staff to provide more substantive customer service until things settle down and they can tidy up.

If your customers tend to focus intently and browse quietly, they might not feel entirely comfortable asking about prices aloud, especially if they have multiple questions during their visit—no one wants to be the lone voice interrupting a peaceful yarn-shop vibe with repeated queries of “how much is this?” Individual labeling allows shoppers to be confident about the prices without much risk of confusion.

Sales and promotions: How often do you change the prices of your yarn? If you run frequent promotions or sales, shelf or bin pricing is easily adjusted to reflect the current prices. Changing individual price stickers, on the other hand, is time-consuming and may not be worth the human-resource investment. And if your yarn is individually price-marked but the labels aren't updated with promotional prices, discounts can add a layer of mental arithmetic and potential confusion.

Point-of-sale system: Price labeling isn't just for customers—it's for you and your staff as well. Most large yarn companies now include barcodes on their ball bands and labels that can be integrated into your POS system. If you carry a fair amount of yarn or fiber from independent and small-scale producers, however, adding an individual barcode label compatible with your system can make transactions more efficient at the register. Just be sure that the labels don't obscure important information on the skein tag or ball band. At Yarn Mart in Little Rock, Arkansas, employees enter yarn companies' barcodes into the store's POS system. For yarns without existing barcodes, they print custom labels marked with the shop name, yarn name, color number, a custom barcode and SKU number. Prices are listed on a shelf tag, along with the company name, yarn name, fiber content, yardage and gauge.

Information: Price labeling is an opportunity to communicate more than just cost. If you're making shelf tags or printing custom labels, you can add information such as fiber content, yardage and suggested gauge in one consistent, easily digestible format across all of the signage in your shop. If they don't have to search each different ball-band design for that information, shoppers can focus on colors and textures and your beautiful shop samples instead of seeking basic data.

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



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BY DARYL BROWER

Knitty City

You can't miss the bright orange awning—or the accompanying flag—that announces the presence of Knitty City, a fixture on the Manhattan knitting scene. Inside what's been called "the world's most high-energy knitting emporium," things are just as cheerful, with a

kaleidoscope of yarns literally spilling from the walls. The selection is vast—everything from Sugar 'n Cream, Plymouth, Cascade and Berroco to Malabrigo, Madelinetosh, Julie Asselin, Prism, Alchemy and Artyarns—but Knitty City is more than just a place to shop. It's a fiber-fueled neighborhood hangout—a colorful space where the crafty convene to swap stories, skills and advice, both knit-oriented and not. And that's just the way owner Pearl Chin envisioned it when she opened the doors a decade ago.

Chin has always been crafty. She launched a wholesale gift business, A Thousand Cranes, in 1989, creating origami with Japanese washi paper and using kimono textiles to create scarves and quilts. "I love working with my hands," she says. She did well, selling mainly to museums and high-end gift stores, but post-9/11, sales began to slow. So Chin started rethinking what she wanted to do.

She had learned to knit 30 years earlier, when she was pregnant with her daughter, teaching herself the basics with the help of Barbara Walker's



Learn-to-Knit Afghan Book, which she purchased for \$6, in hardback no less. "I thought about knitting and crocheting again as a hobby," she says. "A yarn store wasn't on my radar."

Not at first, anyway. An Internet search brought Chin to *Knitter's Review* and *Knitty*, where she discovered a buzzing online community, and sud-

denly she began rethinking her rekindled hobby as a business. "It reminded me of the customers who came to my dad's grocery store in Houston," she says of the online forums. "Bob's Super Market was a hub where the neighborhood came together. I knew I could create my own community of knitters." What she wanted wasn't a store per se but a "yarn studio"—a space "devoted to beautiful materials for knitting and crochet, instructional classes and community connection."

Knitty City opened in January 2006 filled with not only yarns and needles but also one of the most comprehensive collections of needlearts books, magazines and patterns in the city. (Of them, Chin remains partial to Walker's volume: "It's still one of the best books on the market," she says. "Only now it costs \$20 in paperback.") It was one of many shops that opened during the knitting heyday of the mid-aughts, but unlike many of its since-shuttered compatriots, Knitty City is still going strong. Its location in a major metropolis helps. "We have critical mass," Chin says. "We're located on the first floor in a big city; we attract locals and tourists alike. We have a nice website and are fortunate to be listed prominently when people Google 'yarn stores in NYC.'"

Why do knitters flock to Knitty City? Chin credits the shop's success to the fact that she pays close attention to what her customers want and gives them more than just a place to buy yarn. "From day one, we focused on our customers and their needs," she says. "We learned from them what yarns to stock. One of the great things about a POS system is that it helps you to remember your customers' names." And with everyone knowing your name, Knitty City became a place to socialize as well as shop. "We have two round tables where customers are encouraged to learn from each other," Chin says. "Some of our customers have become lifelong friends. Knitty City is a happy place where people feel safe and can trust our staff to help them."

And help they do. Along with informal assistance at the tables and private and group lessons, there's a kids' club and a men's knitting group; every summer the shop gives free learn-to-knit lessons in Bryant Park. Chin aims to have at least three staff members in the shop at all times, expanding to five when the shop is at its busiest. "When people tell me how great Knitty City is, I let them know it is because I have wonderful staff and wonderful customers," she says. To keep that great



staff motivated, she holds monthly meetings, paying employees \$20 in cash if they attend. "On the third Sunday of the month, we meet for bagels and lox before the store opens," Chin explains. "We discuss the work schedule, upcoming events, etc. We also have a monthly learn-something-new session where a staff member teaches a special technique; those who are interested attend. I buy the pizza for those nights, but I'm not present. It's good for them to have time together when the boss is not around."

As with the yarn industry at large, things have changed in the 10 years that Knitty City has been open. Classes have expanded to include spinning and felting, with plans to add weaving this year, and Chin has added more yarns from independent dyers. She sees customers moving toward cowls, chunky yarns and size 50 needles and away from books. "Book sales have dropped dramatically," she says. And though the store is still doing well, she finds growth to be a challenge.

"We offer great customer service, but it's not enough to sway people from buying online," she says. She's trying to turn that around by offering a new service: winding yarn purchased elsewhere and charging \$1 per ball for the privilege. "It won't make us rich, but it gets people into the store. They come in; they spend time looking at our yarns and chatting with our other customers," she says. The hope is that once they're inside, they'll be inspired to buy and become repeat customers. And as anyone who has visited Knitty City can tell you, once you've stepped past that orange awning, chances are pretty good that you'll be back.

Knitty City

208 West 79th Street, New York, NY 10024
www.knittycity.com; (212) 787-5896

Years in business: 10

Square footage: 1,200+ with basement storage

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COMPANY PROFILE

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

Woolyarns/Zealana

To succeed in a crowded market, Zealana chose to concentrate on a single, unique yarn blend.

If you own any merino/possum wool—an odd skein, perhaps, or a pair of socks—it very likely came from a spinning plant in Lower Hutt, New Zealand, about a 20-minute drive from Wellington, on the country's North Island. "We're one of the last remaining wool-spinning plants in the Southern Hemisphere," says Jimad Khan, marketing manager for Woolyarns. "We make 100 tons of merino/possum blended yarns per year and add about \$120 million a year to the [local] economy."

You might know Woolyarns better by the name Zealana, the company's hand-knitting-yarn division, which offers three lines of luxury yarns, including Air, which blends possum with cashmere and silk. In terms of production, however, Zealana accounts for only 5 percent of Woolyarns' output. The company primarily manufactures and sells carpet yarn at home and in Australia and the United States and yarns for weaving and knitting manufacturers.

"Zealana is a small part of the business, but it's our touchpoint with the consumer market, so it's quite an important part of what we do," Khan says. "It gives us great insight into how people react to possum-blended yarns. We'll come up with ideas and then turn them into hand-knitting yarns to see how the market responds. And then we'll play it out and use it in our machine-knitting and commercial knitting yarns if it's successful."

Khan developed the Zealana brand almost a decade ago; shortly after he started at the company, he completed a research project that identified hand knitting as an untapped market. "We initiated the Zealana brand with a small range of yarns," Khan says. "We entered the U.S. market first. Little did we know how hard it would actually be to be a force in the yarn industry."

In 2010, Zealana underwent a rebrand, deciding to focus exclusively on possum-blended yarns. "We quickly learned that we needed to concentrate on merino/possum to have a place in the American market," says Khan. It's no surprise that the company has found success by narrowing its focus: Possum fiber has been found to be 55 percent warmer than 100 percent merino wool and 35 percent warmer than 100 percent cashmere, and it's much less likely to pill than yarns using other fibers.

The team at Zealana has always set its sights abroad—"There was a huge amount of smaller cottage spinning in New Zealand. At launch, we didn't feel as though we were going to get much value out of selling into our domestic market"—though once local knitters started seeing the brand in the pages of such magazines as *Vogue Knitting*, the Woolyarns team began getting calls inquiring about the yarns. The brand can now be found at independent yarn shops in the United States, Canada, the U.K and Europe, Australia and New Zealand and in one shop in Japan.

To stay relevant in these diverse markets, Zealana's product development team sources inspiration from several industries. "Having a mixture of products that range from carpets to high-end apparel for the fashion market in Europe, we get exposed to a lot of different information," Khan says. In fact, Woolyarns fibers were recently used in knitwear for Hermès and worn by models on the catwalks of Europe.



Technology also plays a significant role in Zealana's offerings. "We've got a very strong technical base at Woolyarns," Khan says. "Our managing director was in Italy [last winter] with a team from our production staff to look at machinery. We purchased a new machine there that allows us to make an entirely new type of product. It was purpose-built for carpet, but we can actually cross it over into some hand-knitting yarns."

Zealana's best-selling yarns come from its warm, lightweight Air line. "We introduced a new sock-weight Cozi yarn [merino/possum with 5% baby alpaca, 20% nylon and 2% elastic nylon] at the end of last year, and sales are already quite strong," Khan says. The brand's best-selling color



Address: 25-27 Eastern Hutt Rd., P.O. Box 35-020, Lower Hutt, New Zealand

Employees: 95

Fact: Though possums are considered pests in New Zealand—locals have been known to refer to them as "nature's speed bumps"—Woolyarns works to ensure that the collection and processing of their fur is done ethically. "We have a very strong relationship with the New Zealand fur council, which is connected to the International Fur Federation, and they work very closely with the government here," says Khan. "We signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Conservation in New Zealand, and that has allowed hunters and trappers to follow a certain protocol when trapping the possums."

is Natural. "The natural color does really well across all of our ranges," Khan says. "It's always the top seller. I guess it's quite unique in the fact that it shows the gray undertones of the possum."

Khan works with Woolyarns' Seattle-based brand ambassador, Cirilia Rose, on colors and on what to introduce next to customers.

"Cirilia does a lot of work looking at our range and seeing what we need to add or drop. We haven't dropped any colors for a long time, because there's quite a shift in so many different markets. Something that does well in America might not do as well in New Zealand or Australia, and vice versa."

Khan and Rose also work together on Zealana *Passport*, a collector's item for fans. The company's semi-annual magazine, it features new, free patterns, profiles of guest designers and the occasional travel piece. "Inside [the magazine], there's something we call your Personal Project Planner Card, and it has actual samples of the yarns that you'll find in the magazine," Khan explains. "I thought it would be a neat little add-on, but it's something that people have really embraced, because they can actually touch and feel the yarn to see what it's like."

Innovation, in fiber manufacturing or marketing, is something that seems to come naturally to the Zealana team. Says Khan: "It's just the culture around here. We're always looking for the next idea."



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Yarn in the USA

Why warm American yarn is cool again.

By Leslie Petrovski

In 2006, when Denver's Fancy Tiger yarn shop opened, cofounder and passionate crafter Jaime Jennings wanted to include grown-and-spun American yarn in her merchandise mix. But it didn't take her long to see that her choices were limited to Brown Sheep, Peace Fleece, Green Mountain Spinnery and a smattering of others.

"Back then, people were more concerned with how soft the yarn was, not where it was produced," Jennings says. "Today people do care how it's made and where it's produced, and they're willing to try yarns that are not quite as soft if they have a good story, are ethically sourced and are made in the United States."

Though "soft" still sells, a number of things have changed relative to North America's craft yarn and textile industry in the past 10 years. New technologies and rising overseas labor costs are making American manufacturing options more cost-competitive. Tragedies such as the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh have increased awareness of the human costs of garment making. Plus, knitters are becoming more cognizant of American breeds so they can choose the right fiber for their projects. Some American sheep produce scrumptious, low-micron-count wool, while others grow cozy fibers that resist pilling and wear beautifully for years.

Brown Sheep Company in Mitchell, Nebraska, has been a bellwether of domestic yarn production since 1980. Recognizing the declining lamb market in the mid-1970s, Harlan Brown purchased used yarn-manufacturing equipment and began making the all-American yarns that have become a yarn-shop mainstay. Now outfitted with thoroughly modern equipment, the company continues to buy wool from growers in Wyoming and Colorado, spooling out some 400,000 pounds of yarn annually.

They are not alone. According to Eliza Levy of the National Council of Textile Organizations, the trade group has seen a modest increase in American textile manufacturing activity over the past five years, and they expect it to continue. Look no further than your socks: Companies such as Farm to Feet, which donates 5 percent of its profits to military veterans in need, and Darn Tough Socks, which buys wool from the U.S., Europe and Oceania, are making strides in developing supply chains that include U.S. growers.

But it's not just limited to socks. These days you can buy an all-U.S. "dirt-to-shirt" tee in seven colors from Everlane, a company known for its basics and fastidious transparency. Zady, another sell-direct retailer, offers sweaters made from wool grown at Imperial Stock Ranch in Oregon. And from Boerum Apparel, sweatshirts fashioned from Texas organic cotton can be had.

American wool seems to be gaining cachet among both consumers and ranchers. Recognizing that adding value to their wool can provide an important income stream, American sheep farmers are starting to see wool as more than just a by-product of raising sheep.

At the sprawling 30,000-acre Imperial Stock Ranch in Shaniko, Oregon, owners Jeanne and Dan Carver had to take a hard look at their business in 1999 when their longtime wool buyer refused to purchase their annual clip. Knowing they had to do something to preserve the ranch and its lifestyle, they partnered with a small mill, turning their sunlight-and-grass-grown wool into bouncy, creamy industrial apparel and hand-knitting yarns.

The Carvers' yarn gained a following. So when Ralph Lauren, chastened for having manufactured the 2012 U.S. Olympic team's uniforms in China, began work on the 2014 uniforms, the company turned to the Oregon ranchers for the raw material that would



warm the backs of U.S. athletes parading into Fisht Olympic Stadium in Sochi, Russia. Since then, Imperial Stock Ranch wool has found its way into stocking caps for Detroit-based Shinola, throws sold at Nordstrom, and a line of high-end knits the ranch produced in partnership with designer Anna Cohen called the Imperial Collection. They also continue to sell wool to clothier Ralph Lauren and to brands including Room and Board, Coyuchi, Billy Reid and Guideboat, among others.

"We definitely saw a spike in sales during and following the Olympics," Jeanne Carver says. "I think right now we are seeing many more people putting their focus on U.S. fibers and processing."

Industrial and craft yarn manufacturers too are rethinking their supply chains. Kraemer Yarns in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, experienced the devastating results of off-shoring firsthand, losing about 80 percent of its business to foreign factories. Traditionally focused on the manufacture of apparel yarns, hosiery and home furnishing yarns, in addition to producing craft yarns for other companies, the family business re-trenched, laid off employees, and launched its own line of hand-knitting yarns in 2005. "We went from 500 to 50 employees," says Kraemer's Victor Schmidt. "We didn't want to be at the whim of Macy's as it decided whether to place an order with us or with China, so we decided to create our own line of hand-knitting yarns."

Today Kraemer makes a wide array of yarn for hand knitters—everything from a bulky alpaca blend (the camelid fiber hails from the Alpaca Fiber Cooperative of North America) to a line of workhorse yarns called Perfection (acrylic blended with U.S. merino)—that constitutes about 35 percent of the manufacturer's business. Though they have always purchased U.S.-grown fiber, in the last year they decided to source all wool, alpaca and cotton for their craft and industrial yarns from the lower 48.

"It just made sense for us," explains Kraemer Yarns President David Schmidt. "We've always used U.S. wool, if for nothing else than for reliability. Maybe we're being selfish, but we think it makes a lot of sense to source domestically; we don't have to worry about the container being delayed or the dockworkers going on strike. We made the conscious decision to do this, because we felt we should. We feel it's important that we support American fiber."

Stars-and-Stripes String

Yarn shops now have their pick of an increasingly large flock of yarns that were born in the USA. Starting out with only three domestic yarns a decade ago, Jaime Jennings estimates that Fancy Tiger Crafts now boasts a yarn inventory that's about 50 percent American. Cuddled up on their racks and shelves are yarns that include their store-branded Heirloom, a 100 percent Romney produced by Jeane deCoster of Elemental Affects; Spincycle's colorful skeins; Wyoming's Mountain

Meadow Wool; hulking balls of Loopy Mango's dreadlock-like Big Loop; as well as Shelter, Loft and Quarry from Brooklyn Tweed—all spun from American fleeces.

"Hell, yes!" wrote *Knitter's Review* founder Clara Parkes in an email when asked whether folks want U.S. sheep-to-skein yarns. "I'm seeing a huge uptick in interest in all-American yarns, which parallels the broader public excitement about American-made goods, spanning everything from watches (Shinola) to sweatshirts (American Giant)."

In addition to a *Zeitgeist*-y fascination with products that telegraph their authenticity, all-American yarns have been helped by other factors. Parkes herself has written hundreds of thousands of words championing sheepy skeins and the people responsible for them. And social media has made it possible for needleworkers to share their fiber-fest hauls, thereby lifting up lesser-known farm yarns, brands and fibers to a wider audience.

The same-year launch of two popular yarn lines also helped expose All-American yarn to the wider yarn-crafting community. In 2010, knitwear designer and blogger Jared Flood released Shelter, the first yarn under the Brooklyn Tweed label, a hearty woolen-spun worsted weight that could trace its roots back to Targhee-Columbia sheep raised in Johnson County, Wyoming. Also that year, knitwear designer Pam Allen launched her American yarn line, Quince & Co., with four yarns spun from territory wool, a blend of merino, Rambouillet and Columbia-based fibers from Montana and Wyoming.

Here were two strong red-white-and-blue brands combining exquisite patterns, imagery and yarn with backstory. "As people see more companies like us and Quince do products that are American," Flood explains, "it starts to look like a potentially good business model, so other yarn companies start to think, 'We should do this, too.'"

But making yarn on American soil is not the path of least resistance. Moribund factories, limited milling capacity and a sheep industry largely focused on meat challenge yarnpreneurs interested in keeping things local.

The author of *The Knitter's Book of Yarn* and *The Knitter's Book of Wool*, Clara Parkes embarked on her own made-in-the-U.S.A. experiment in 2013, when she bought a 676-pound bale of Saxon-Merino wool from a New York farmer that she dubbed The Great White Bale. The adventure would not only land Parkes four beautiful mule-spun yarns (which sold out promptly); it also schooled her on the challenges of making yarn stateside. (She continues to make and sell out small-batch yarns under her Clara Yarn label.)

"We haven't seen a significant expansion in our supply chain or manufacturing infrastructure yet, which means there will be greater and greater competition for limited resources in the short term," she says. "Competition for the good American wool and for time at the

PHOTOGRAPH BY JARED FLOOD/BROOKLYN TWEED



TOOLING AROUND THE U.S.

Looking to source your knitting and crochet tools closer to home? Here are a few companies that are making stitching tools in these United States.

AGeary Woodworks

Mentored by Ed Jenkins of Jenkins Yarn Tools, woodworker Allison Geary makes crochet hooks, knitting needles and hairpin looms at her wood shop in Portland, Oregon.

Brittany

A family business, Brittany makes knitting needles and crochet hooks from sustainably harvested birch in Northern California.

Denise Interchangeable Knitting and Crochet

Another family business, Denise has been making its plastic needles and crochet hooks in the United States since 1973.

Dyakcraft

Home of Darn Pretty knitting needles and crochet hooks, the Vermont-based company also makes solid aluminum needles called Northern Light and solid stainless-steel needles called Heavy Metal.

Indian Lake Artisans

This Michigan-based company makes all of its wooden hexagonal needles using companies from the Great Lakes State.

Kollage Yarns

This yarn company not only spins and dyes its superwash merino, Happiness, in the States; it also makes its Square needles on American soil.

Pearls Knitting Needles

These plastic knitting needles are made in Oregon.

Signature Needle Arts

Known for its “Stiletto point” needles, Signature Needle Arts’ metal needles are made at the woman-owned machining company Bothe Associates Inc. in Wisconsin.

Twin Birch Products

Twin Birch Products is a cottage industry that makes its knitting needles and crochet hooks by hand in North Carolina.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF IMPERIAL STOCK RANCH

biggest mills will only get tighter and tighter, and I don't see much relief here in the foreseeable future. It takes time to build a flock and secure sufficient land for grazing, or secure the necessary capital to start a mill—and many good people have been burned so many times before that they're reluctant to rebuild now.”

Though Brooklyn Tweed has grown to nine employees and three core yarns and has amassed a pattern archive of 400 designs, the company spends a lot of time working to perfect processes, discover and vet fiber sources, and develop new supply chains. “There are things you don't have to do when you're outsourcing, because of the technology in Italy, South America and China,” says Flood. “When you commit to American manufacturing, you are committing to helping develop [and scale] systems, because you're dealing with [smaller and, in some cases, less-experienced] mills, which are spinning their own products or small-batch goods for other clients and are unaccustomed to larger orders. But the more people who manufacture here, the easier it will be for all of us.”

A Yarn of One's Own

The challenges of making yarn in the USA aren't stopping yarn shop

owners determined to create unique products for their brand. Tolt Yarn and Wool owner Anna Dianich literally stumbled on the sheep for what would become Tolt's first yarn on the side of the road not far from her yarn shop in Carnation, Washington, located in the Snoqualmie Valley. After introducing herself to organic sheep farmer Jeff Rogers, Dianich agreed to pay for the shearing and to donate 20 percent of the proceeds to Seattle Children's Hospital. Spun organically at Green Mountain Spinnery in Vermont, Snoqualmie Valley Yarn is a hardworking woolen-spun that comes undyed and naturally dyed by Local Color Fiber Studio on Bainbridge Island. Since releasing the original yarn a year and a half ago, Tolt has produced two additional runs of the Blue-Faced Leicester and Clun Forest skeins. “We sell out of every batch,” Dianich says.

Dianich is among a handful of LYSOs who are peering into pastures and connecting with mill owners in an effort to create yarns that aren't just American, but sourced from their states. A Verb for Keeping Warm in Oakland has created four American yarns, two of which feature California wool. And to celebrate the store's tenth birthday, Denver's Fancy Tiger is planning to release its own limited-edition yarn—grown and spun in the Centennial State.

"The challenge has been sourcing the wool—finding farmers with wool that's of a quality high enough for a hand-knitting yarn, but who don't already have a buyer they work with," Jaime Jennings explains. "It has also been a challenge to find a mill to work with, since they seem to all be mini-mills here in Colorado, which means they aren't used to handling the volume we require. So far we've overcome both of these issues and have both farmers and a mill we're working with, so I'm optimistic that we can do it."

In spite of all this activity in the domestic sphere, not all yarn shops find that their clients are clamoring for American yarn. Liz Tekus, who's owned Fine Points in Cleveland, Ohio, for 30 years, says her customers tend to choose yarns based on color and hand. "It's a valiant idea," she says of the buy-local movement, "but when push comes to shove in our store, customers love Madelinetosh because it's pretty to look at and it feels good."

The same is true at Loop in Philadelphia. Even though the store has its own branded yarn, Loop Studio, made from 100 percent U.S. merino spun in Pennsylvania, Loop owner Craig Rosenfeld says he used American fiber primarily because the price was right. In the future, to create an attractively priced yarn, "we would consider going outside the U.S. to find the right price point [if well-priced American fiber wasn't available]. Often, 'domestic' means 'more expensive.' It's similar to organic—our customers won't spend more for it."

Indeed, Rosenfeld has swapped out inventory to carry fewer all-American organics because they weren't selling well. "The yarn was beautiful," Rosenfeld says. "But for our customers, it was just too

expensive, even after we explained the benefits and the reasons behind the additional cost."

But for Flood and others who adore yarns that carry a hint of America's fruited plain, knitting with these products is like the difference between drinking Trader Joe's Two Buck Chuck and single varietal wines made from grapes raised sustainably by trusted vintners. "There is a sophistication growing across the industry when it comes to fiber awareness," he says. "It's not longer just 'wool.' There are all these different types of wool, which have unique qualities depending on how you spin them. People who started knitting during the huge resurgence of the early 2000s have had time to develop a more sophisticated palate. They've had the chance to work with something closer to the source."

Though Quince and Co. sources linen, silk and some alpaca from abroad, most of its yarns are created using raw materials from the United States. In writing about Quince and Co.'s upcoming release of a bulky 50/50 blend of Texas merino and Texas mohair called Ibis, Pam Allen summarized her love of star-spangled string this way: "Of the oh-so-many reasons to rejoice in American-made yarn, my favorite is that by sourcing domestic wool and goat hair, we protect open spaces in our country. I don't know about you, but I want to sing when I see an uninterrupted field stretching away from me. I can't help it. Vistas are good for our health. They make us breathe deeply. Next time you pick up a skein of yarn spun from American wool or mohair, no matter who makes it, thank yourself for helping to provide a place to graze."

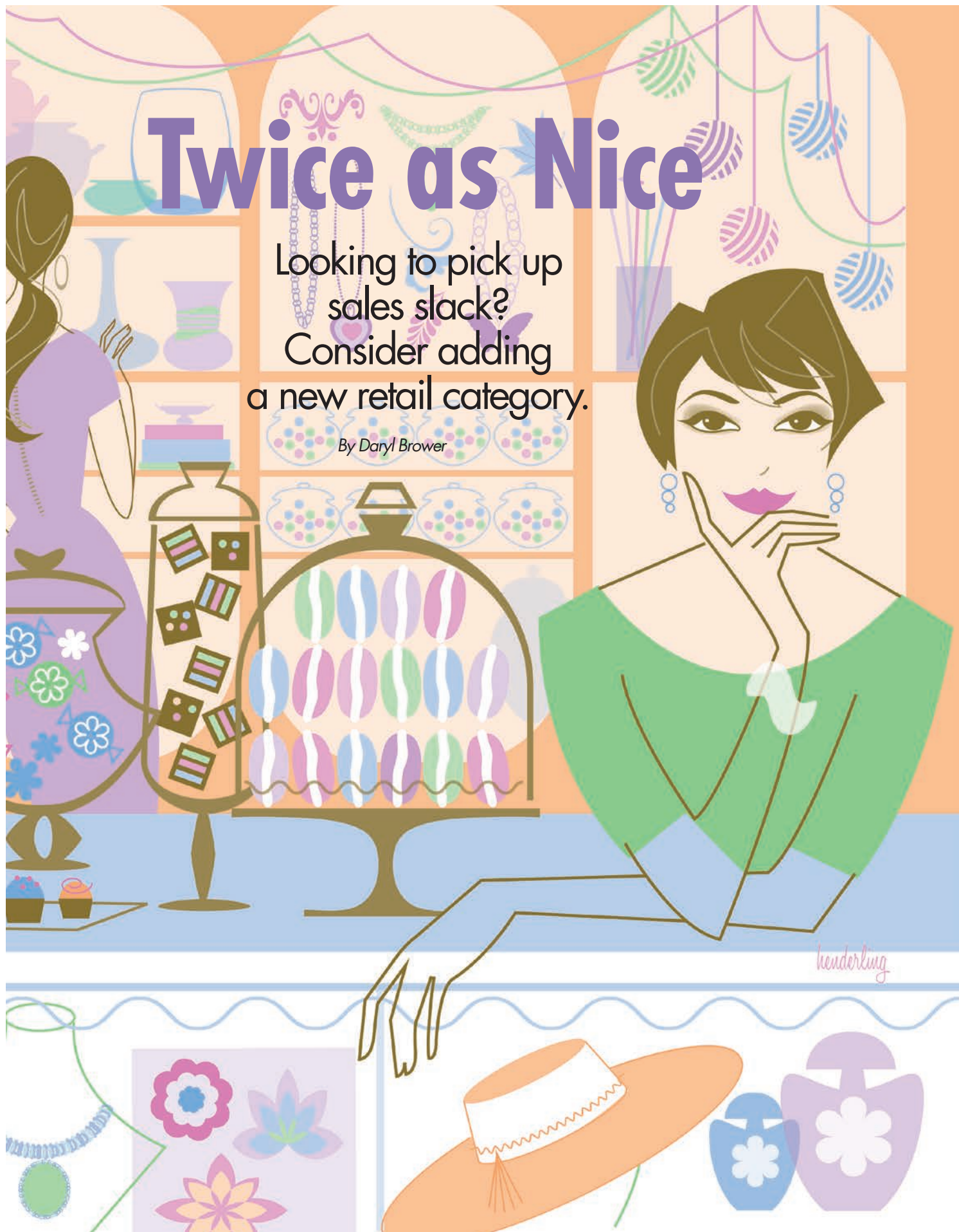
PHOTOGRAPH BY JARED FLOOD/BROOKLYN TWEED



Twice as Nice

Looking to pick up
sales slack?
Consider adding
a new retail category.

By Daryl Brower



Like the yarn business itself, LYS sales are subject to lots of ups and downs. Unless you're in a resort area, summer tends to bring a slow-down in sales as knitters turn their thoughts away from wool. Some shops deal with a sales drought by shortening hours or pushing other activities, like classes and workshops. A few shops, however, have embraced a rising retail trend: combining two different categories under a single roof. What we're talking about here goes beyond the familiar knit-café model. Rather than offering a cappuccino or a glass of wine along with the cashmere and cotton or positioning a few small gift items near the register, these stores bring in a full-on business that not only keeps knitters intrigued when their thoughts stray beyond yarn, but also entices non-knitting customers to pay a visit. And should those customers pick up a set of needles while they're shopping for books, ready-to-wear clothing or even cheese, so much the better. Here's a look at three such businesses and how they make it work.

Hill Vintage and Knits

Des Moines, Iowa

Alternate category: Vintage clothing

Years in business: 5

Which came first? Vintage clothing

For Erica Carnes and Jessica Miller of Hill Vintage and Knits in Des Moines, Iowa, yarn was an addition to a growing business they founded in 2010: selling vintage clothing at bazaars and markets. "In the beginning, it was a way to purge our closets and generate income to buy more," says Carnes. "Then we realized how much we loved the experience." The following spring, the two purchased a 1964 camper trailer and began running pop-up sales in and around Des Moines. A year or so later they were ready to settle into a bricks-and-mortar location. "At that time, we were still just selling vintage clothing, but we are both knitters and selfishly wanted all of our loves under one roof," explains Carnes. "So we opened Hill Vintage and Knits in June 2012 as a vintage clothing/yarn shop."

Carnes admits that she and Miller weren't completely confident in their plan to incorporate yarn to their business model. "We didn't really know if it was a good idea," she says, laughing. "We mostly knew

that we loved vintage clothing and knitting." Still, they decided to forge ahead. "As a maker, I get a lot of inspiration from the colors, designs and construction of vintage garments, and this feeds over to my knitting," Carnes says. "By having both of these collections in one place, we've organically created a fun and welcoming space to be creative in. I thought our customers might like that too."

In terms of sales and inventory, the shop splits pretty evenly down the middle, though there are seasonal shifts in what's selling. "We're located in a region that experiences very cold weather, so we bulk up our yarn inventory in the fall and it thins itself in the summer," Carnes says. "We here in Iowa are very seasonal knitters, because we have a shorter time frame to enjoy the outdoors. In the height of summer, our community comes alive with different offerings of things to do, and people spend more time away from their needles and hooks. The yarn side is very busy in the fall/winter when vintage is slower, and the reverse is true in the spring/summer." Last summer, the shop branched out a bit more and started carrying goods by local artists. "It's really important to us to be involved in and supportive of the makers in our community," says Carnes.

While both partners profess equal amounts of appreciation for the two categories that sell in the shop, they do divvy up the merchandising and marketing. "I handle more of the yarn side and Jessica handles more of the vintage side," Carnes explains. "Jessica and I work well together because we have similar interests and different skill sets; we run most decisions by each another and are in constant communication."

Carnes admits that first-time customers tend to be a bit confused by the mix initially but quickly embrace both the yarn and the clothing. "The hardest part of making a sale is getting people through the door," she says. "By having diverse offerings, we have more opportunities to introduce customers to a new skill or to the idea of wearing vintage clothing." Carnes says the combination works because the two categories complement each other. "We get to work in an environment that we love and that inspires us. On a more business-related note and totally by accident, the two work together very, very well. Right now our biggest problem is space—we need more of it!"

(continued on page 50)

CONSIDER THIS

Does your second business make sense in terms of the first?

Think about how your two businesses will combine in terms of both merchandise and customer base. Do the two categories make sense together or relate in some way?

Would adding the new items draw in new customers without making your existing ones scratch their heads? If not, you may want to reconsider.

Are you knowledgeable about the merchandise or service you'll be adding?

A yarn shop/pottery studio may sound like a dream—two artistic endeavors in one space. But if you and your staff know nothing about working with clay, you're bound to stumble. "To marry two businesses, you need to be

comfortable with both," says Meg Gregory of Ewe and I in Chehalis, Washington. Make sure you know enough about how to source merchandise and support the category you'll be adding. If not, hire someone who does or rethink the enterprise altogether.

Thinking about branching out? Here are a few questions to ask yourself before you embark on your own dual business.

Are you willing to fully commit to both categories?

For a dual business model to succeed, you can't short-change one category for the sake of the other. "I'm not sure how it would work to just have

a little yarn or a small book selection," says Cathy Blizzard Dunn of Northwind Book & Fiber. "We're successful because we offer good selections and support for both." Assess your resources—both financial and physical—and make sure you have enough of both.

Twice as Nice *(continued from page 49)*

Northwind Book & Fiber

Spooner, Wisconsin

Years in business: 23

Alternate category: Books

Which came first: Both have been there from the start.

Carol Blizzard Dunn's Wisconsin yarn shop/bookstore, Northwind Book & Fiber, came prepackaged. "The previous owners combined the two things they loved, books and yarn," says Dunn. "It's a combination that makes perfect sense—after all, knitters read and readers knit, and both are largely quiet pursuits."

Northwind has been in business since 1993. Dunn took over in 2007, an experience that was, for her, the fulfillment of a longtime dream. She had considered opening up shop herself when she first moved to Spooner, especially when she found out that the closest bookstore was 90 miles away. But, home with young children at the time, she didn't see a way of making things work. Luckily, Northwind opened not long after Dunn arrived, and she soon became a regular customer and part-time employee. When the original owners were ready to sell, Dunn was ready to buy, having learned to knit a few years before, courtesy of classes at the store.

Northwind isn't a yarn shop that sells books or a bookshop with a small selection of yarns. "Both are full-fledged businesses," Dunn explains. The yarn division carries Plymouth, Berroco, Westminster, Skacel, Brown Sheep and more, all supported by lots of classes—everything from beginner basics to more advanced techniques. On the book end of the business, things are equally expansive, with all the categories you'd expect from an independent bookseller, albeit with a few more knitting titles. Books carry the bulk of business—about 60 percent—according to Dunn, with yarn making up about 30 percent of sales. The rest of the shop's inventory is in toys, games and a small selection of jewelry and art sold on consignment. She admits that running what is essentially two different businesses has its challenges. "It's a lot of work," she says. "Books require lots of inventory management every day. We could do so many more samples, etc., if we were dealing with yarn alone."

The shop operates with a small staff, so Dunn has the challenge of finding employees who are well versed in both books and yarn. "Some, like me, have learned to knit on the job," she says. "When customers are here specifically for yarn help, it's essential that we have a knowledgeable staff person in the store." Still, she thinks combining the two categories is what keeps the shop afloat. "I don't think the yarn portion could make it by itself, and maybe not the bookstore either. They each provide business when the other might be slower." Her customers are happy with the balance as well. "They tell us we're their favorite store because we combine their two favorite things," Dunn says.

Ewe and I

Chehalis, Washington

Alternate category: Creamery

Years in business: 1

Which came first: Creamery

Ewe and I, a combination yarn and cheese shop in Chehalis, Washington, grew out of Black Sheep Creamery, the small dairy that Meg Gregory and her husband, Brad, launched in 2000. The sheep were there for the Gregorys' middle child. "He couldn't tolerate cow's milk," Gregory explains. "The sheep milk worked, he outgrew the allergy, and all of the sudden we had 15 ewes we were milking and a small farm that needed a niche market." Unwilling to let go of the sheep but needing a way for them to earn their keep, the Gregorys started making and selling cheese. Gregory met her now business partner, Kathy Green, at the Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival. "She came to the booth where Brad and I were selling cheese and started asking questions," Gregory explains. The two women

soon learned that they lived only 6 miles from each other. "Kathy offered to help us with shearing, and before long she was working at the farm making the fresh cheeses we sell all spring and summer."

Along the way, Gregory learned to knit. "We had all this wool that wasn't being used to its best potential." She found a local designer, Susan Gehringer, who helped create yarn and patterns that "fit our wool and our farm." The fiber and patterns sold in a small retail operation on the farm, but cheese was the primary focus of the business until 2014. That's when the local yarn store announced it was closing. "I had a cheese customer tell me she was concerned that the women who met [at the shop] would no longer have a place to meet and knit," says Gregory, who along with Green was also a customer of the store. Eager to fill the impending void, Gregory inquired about purchasing the store. Those plans fell through, but the women found another way to fulfill their plan.

At the time the yarn shop was closing, the Gregorys were working to combine their flock with another sheep dairy in the area. "That gave us both the ability to hire a farm manager and to concentrate on making cheese," Gregory explains. "We had no problem milking and making cheese when there were only 50 animals, but both of our dairies were getting nearer to 100 sheep, and that needed full-time attention." It was a kind of serendipity. "The merger meant that the creamery had to be moved off the farm. A yarn shop was in Kathy and my dreams, and there was a rundown storefront in downtown Chehalis that needed someone to love it." They bought the building in November 2014 and spent nearly a year renovating it into a space that could house both the creamery and the yarn store, finally opening last October.

On the yarn side of the shop, a 40-foot wall of cubbies is stocked with yarns from Rowan, Dream in Color, Mountain Colors and more, along with offerings from independent dyers and Fresian wool from Gregory's own sheep. An interior window gives knitting customers a look into the creamery, where they can see the cheeses being made; along with fiber and needles, Ewe and I sells salamis and other cheese accompaniments. "There's also an espresso bar, and we serve small plates: daily soup and a cheese biscuit, and salami and cheese platters," notes Gregory. "We also have our eye on a convection oven so we can make scones in the morning to serve with yogurt and fruit."

Though the two businesses share space, some financials are kept separate. The Gregorys own Black Sheep Creamery, while Gregory and Green share ownership of Ewe and I. "Ewe and I purchases cheese wholesale from Black Sheep Creamery," Gregory explains. "That way we have only one cash register." Employees are hired by Ewe and I so that hours don't need to be split between the two businesses, and Gregory and Green share pretty much equally in buying for the yarn shop. "Kathy's a much better knitter, though," Gregory says.

She figures that yarn makes up 60 percent or better of Ewe and I's sales. "The food items are mainly to provide comfort and entertainment while shopping for yarns," she explains, noting that customers are encouraged to enjoy a bite to eat as they sit and knit. "But yarn and cheese work as a unit for us. We had a small retail space on the farm, but it is much easier to sell from this store."

Customers, too, seem to appreciate the combination. "We get a lot of crossover sales," says Green. "We also get to introduce people to more things sheep. We've had a presence in the Northwest [selling cheese] for several years, and it's nice to bring those customers into a place where they can see the cheese being made and see what else sheep can do. Opening up eyes to the world of fiber and art has been really fun."

As for the yarn customers, they're getting a bit of enlightenment too. "I didn't know you could milk sheep," is something we hear a lot," says Gregory. "We're doing what we love and providing jobs in a depressed area of the state." And perhaps best of all, the women who used to meet at the old yarn store now have a new home. "We have 20 to 30 women in the knitting group who are here every Friday, enjoying themselves," says Gregory. "That's a total joy."

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A GENTLE TOUCH



Twenty-five years old last year, Eucalan started as a humble homemade wool wash. Today, **Jennifer Edgar** heads the family business, ensuring every swatch is blocked and every garment lasts. YMN's Erin Slonaker sat down with Edgar recently to find out more about the company and the product that started it all.

YMN: You came to this business through marriage. Tell us a little about Eucalan's beginnings and about your own history with the company.

JE: Eucalan was a new business for the Edgar family. In the early days, my mother-in-law, Mary Ellen, who founded the company, shared sample bottles of Eucalan, which were packaged in the Edgars' home office, with shop owners in Ontario [Eucalan is based in the southern Ontario town of Paris] and the U.S who had seen the results and were willing to give it a try. Over the years I have done every job there is to do here, starting with office assistant. I'm now CEO. On any given day, I could be working in the warehouse or answering the phone or meeting with customers who've come to see us. It's been wonderful being here as the company has grown and evolved, and I've enjoyed seeing how our customers have changed. We've grown up with them.

YMN: The product you make has its roots in an old tradition. Can you tell us more about that?

JE: The concept for our "wool-wash," as it was called in the beginning, came about during a trip Mary Ellen and her husband, Harold, took to Australia and New Zealand, where a friend introduced them to a commonly used, homemade no-rinse product for woolens. Two of the ingredients formed the basis of our company's product and name: Lanolin is the natural choice for conditioning wool fibers that have been scoured and left feeling dry and scratchy; eucalyptus essential oil is a necessary component to help keep pests at bay and to impart a fresh scent. Fast-forward 25 years. Today we manufacture the product ourselves, with some minor changes, while holding true to simple ingredients. Because these ingredients are so gentle, rinsing isn't required and garments are left clean and fresh and lightly conditioned.

YMN: Where do you get inspiration/ideas for new products?

JE: Our customers provide great inspiration. For example, a long time ago our product was available in one size. One of our main accounts requested a small bottle for their mail-order business. We met their needs with a 60 ml stock bottle. That size [approximately 2 ounces] became a hit with other customers, so we made it a permanent part of our line. We also added a 100 ml [3.5 ounce] bottle, which is a nicer size and shape for traveling. We were very fortunate that following the changes to airline travel, our bottles still fit the restrictions.

YMN: Tell us about the hunt for scents. How do you source them? How do you decide which scents to offer?

JE: Scents are a tricky thing. Since we use only non-synthetic essential oils, not every scent or oil will work with our formula. The lavender scent came about because of consumer demand. It's a natural complement to baby items and intimate apparel.

YMN: Has education and outreach been a focus of the business? How hard has it been to teach people about blocking?

JE: We are all about education! Mary Ellen has taught a lot of people over the years how to do laundry. We've grown through word of mouth

// THE CREATIVITY OF KNITTERS AND DESIGNERS IS TRULY WONDERFUL—THEIR IMAGINATIONS ARE LIMITLESS. //

and by offering a product that actually does what it says. Our customers wouldn't be loyal to us if Eucalan didn't work. If you want your fine hand knits to last a lifetime, it's imperative that you care for them properly. And that

goes for all fine fabrics. When we started this business, it was a strange concept to wash a sweater in something other than a grocery-store brand, which is really far too harsh on fibers. We encourage everyone to try the product: Seeing is believing. Of course, blocking is imperative. Many knitters still don't block, and there are so many great blog posts about blocking being that important final step in finishing a piece you so lovingly created. The transformation is amazing.

YMN: Do you always block your swatches?

JE: The truth is, I've never knit anything big enough to swatch first! [laughs] But I always block my finished pieces.

YMN: How have you seen the industry change over the years?

JE: The development of new fibers alone is amazing. The Internet and social media have played such huge roles in the sharing of ideas. Knitting used to be passed along from one generation to the next. Today, it doesn't matter if you learned from your mother or grandmother; there's no barrier to picking up these skills. You can find a tutorial or video for everything you need online.

YMN: Any predictions for the future of the industry?

JE: Creativity abounds! I'm sure the trade shows will evolve to incorporate new concepts and mediums, and hopefully the LYS will always be around for the personal touch and camaraderie.

YMN: Continental or English?

JE: English, but I'd like to try Continental.

YMN: What's on the needles right now?

JE: A gorgeous drop-stitch shawl by designer Kristin Omdahl.

YMN: What do you do for fun?

JE: Travel with my family is high on the list of priorities, as well as making time for friends and family. I love supporting my kids with their sports. I'm a voracious reader. And the whole family enjoys making endless jokes at the expense of our sweet but silly mini dachshund, Yuki.

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