

STATE OF The industry Results

We share the findings of our recent survey.

BEYOND Basic

Best-selling yarns through the ages.

INVENTORY TRACKING

More ways to keep an eye on orders, cash flow and profit margins

OCTOBER 2016

EXPLORING THE YARNIVERSE





EDITOR'S LETTER





Visualize It

I sat in the back of the room last spring at the Yarn Market News Smart Business



on the cover

Solar System

Yarn-covered planets span the galaxy of our dreams! Lorna's Laces yarns come in several weights and thousands of colorways, with one perfect for each celestial body. lornaslaces.net Photograph by Marcus Tullis Conference—the event that brings together yarn shop owners from across the country to discuss their businesses and make them stronger. I am always eager to hear what our speakers have to say, after having worked so hard to find them and to ensure their messages will resonate with the audience. Our first speaker, life coach Tracy Williams, focused on visualization. Her session asked attendees to make a clear commitment and decision for themselves and their businesses and to be bold about it. She says that unless you take the time to visualize success, you will not be able to achieve it.

That message really resonated with me, and with the other attendees as well. Do you have a crystal-clear vision for the future of your business? Do you understand all that will go into achieving the goals you've set? That's what *Yarn Market News* hopes to be for all of its readers: a resource for your success. That is why we print the kinds of articles we do, from profiles of the businesspeople who populate our industry (Jim Bryson gives some advice on page 44) to articles on inventory management (learn how to plan for holidays or other events on page 28). While you're on your road to success, you must ensure the safety of your store: Daryl Brower explores emergency plans on page 34. You will want to stock new books and interesting yarns: See our book and yarn reviews on pages 14 and 16. We see this magazine as a tool, and we hope you are putting it to good use.

With that in mind, we partnered with Sven Risom last fall to take stock of our readers in the form of a survey. We wanted to know how stores and businesses in the yarn industry are performing—and wondered what well-performing stores are doing that those who aren't achieving their goals are not. Sven presented the research at the con-



ference in Atlanta last March, and the results were fascinating. (He condensed them into an article you'll find on page 40.)

Take the time to set your intentions and visualize your success, then open up this issue and start taking notes. I hope *YMN* will help keep you on track so you are able to meet your goals.



Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief

FOLLOW YARN MARKET NEWS ON FACEBOOK

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Cold Mountain Pullover

Cumberland Poncho



OCTOBER 2016

features

44 YMN'S STATE OF THE INDUSTRY REPORT

Yarn Market News and North Light Horizons researched what is working today for local yarn shops—and what will work tomorrow. Here, we present the results. By Sven Risom

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Yarn: The Movie showcases the work of four women who use yarn in their performances.



"If I'm making a big piece for a yarn-bomb, why not make it a little bigger and go for a world record too?" Wandow with a second barger wi



To measure attitudes, our survey created a "word cloud" to map the use of certain phrases.





Can selling yarn support the good things in the world? String Theory's Janet Avila believes it can.



In the yarn industry, affordable all-purpose yarns are the blockbusters.

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KNIT

CONQUER







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The next issue of YMN will mail in December 2016.

Pattern #232 Children's Tunic www.knittingpureandsimple.com

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MARKET REPORT BY LESLIE PETROVSKI

NEW LOOK FOR FALL



Have you picked up the latest issue of Vogue Knitting? In stores on September 6, the Fall Vogue Knitting now boasts the same logo type and dimensions as Vogue magazine.

Born in 1932 and published by Vogue's parent company, Condé Nast, until 1969, Vogue Knitting was revived by the Butterick Company in 1982; SoHo Publishing Company, founded by two former Butterick executives, took the reins in 2001. The current redesign represents the first time Vogue's crafty sibling has been allowed to use the "Vogue" font on the front cover.

"People think we're part of Condé Nast," explains Trisha Malcolm, vice president and editorial director of SoHo Publishing, which also publishes Yarn Market News. "But we're actually a small, family-owned

business, very much like a yarn store. This is a game-changer for us in a lot of ways. Vogue Knitting is now visibly under the umbrella of the most recognized fashion brand in the world."

Under the art direction of creative director Diane Lamphron, Vogue Knitting has also undergone a complete interior redesign, with new typeface treatments, streamlined photography and refreshed layouts. The Fall issue also debuted at a different size to mirror the format that Vogue magazine tested in May. At 9 inches, Vogue Knitting is now a full inch wider, which, Malcolm says, is a better showcase for photography." Everyone who's seen the new format has been impressed. Refreshing our heritage brand makes a statement at a time when the yarn industry is undergoing so much change."

YOUR NAME HERE

▼ Want custom needles for your store? Knitters' Pride, a manufacturer of knitting needles, crochet hooks and accessories, will now laser-print your name or logo on orders of Naturalz and Nova Platina needles. For smaller sizes—U.S. 0 to 7—the company will print your shop name (22 characters or less) in the font Arial. Logos can be printed on U.S. 8s and larger. Printing costs 1 cent per needle. To find a wholesaler, visit www.knitterspride.com/find-store.asp.



UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION



▼ Hal Ozbelli, president of Universal Yarns and outgoing TNNA board member, received the 2016 TNNA TEN award at the June trade show. The award is given annually to those who represent excellence

in the needlearts industry.

"This recognition by the industry is a great honor, especially since I've been in this business for only 11 years," Ozbelli wrote in an email. "It has been a pleasure to serve TNNA as a board member and to spend time working with such talented, dedicated people. I encourage all members to attend the meetings, join a committee and get involved. It takes all of us bringing our passion, efforts and commitment to make our industry strong."

TNNA UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

▼ On October 1, **The National Needlearts Association** officially transitioned to a new management company, Chicago-based Smith-**Bucklin**. A full-service association management firm, SmithBucklin will provide TNNA with a complete management solution that includes working with the TNNA board to hire a chief executive, coordinating TNNA membership recruitment and retention, guiding the TNNA trade shows, and improving education, marketing and communications. The SmithBucklin team also will manage TNNA's Helping Hands Foundation (HHF), which is the nonprofit arm that runs the Needle Arts Mentoring Program (NAMP).

The company was chosen after a rigorous vetting process by the TNNA board. Impressed by the in-house resources available through SmithBucklin and the company's attitude toward increasing membership and reinvigorating the TNNA trade shows, the TNNA board unanimously agreed on the choice.

TNNA Board President Dave Van Stralen,

who is also president of Louet, says TNNA members can look forward to a January trade show with a new look and feel, along with the launch of a refreshed website in coming months.

SMITHBUCKLIN

The board is confident that SmithBucklin can help TNNA address flagging membership and trade show attendance numbers. "I want the decision to join TNNA to be an automatic one for every yarn shop owner. I want the general feeling to be that if you miss a show, you will be missing something important and your business will suffer," Van Stralen says. "If we create those perceptions, our membership will climb, and we can do more for the industry, from retailers to wholesalers."

Past TNNA board member Gwen Bortner is currently serving as interim executive director during the search for the new chief staff executive. TNNA will move its headquarters to Chicago effective in late September.



SIZE MATTERS

▼ It took two years, seven months and 17 days, 30 miles of **Red Heart** Super Saver yarn, a 5mm crochet hook and **Stephen Duneier** to bring the world's largest granny square into being.

Duneier, an institutional investment advisor, UC Santa Barbara lecturer and self-styled yarn bomber, rolled out the supersized swatch on the front lawn of Santa Barbara's The Fess Parker—A Doubletree by Hilton Resort. Once installed, surveyors measured the brightly colored square at 1,311 square feet.

No stranger to large, public crochet projects, Duneier has made a name for himself installing large Christo-like yarn art in the Santa Barbara mountains. Starting with the yarn-bomb of a 40-foot-tall eucalyptus tree on the Cold Spring trail in 2012, Duneier has wrapped a massive boulder at the top of Saddlerock Trail, hung a giant starfish above the pools at Seven Falls, and created an encampment of crocheted tents and aliens in the Los Padres National Forest, among other projects.

While many of his pieces involve knitted and crocheted contributions from other stitchers (he has received work from more than 650 people from around the world), the *gigante* granny is his "baby." The square project started while Duneier was on a business trip to Manhattan, when it dawned on him that making larger squares might be a more efficient way to crochet. As that New York square kept getting bigger and bigger, Duneier realized he might have something noteworthy on his hands. Not finding a Guinness category for "largest crocheted granny square," Duneier submitted an application to the Guinness organization to create a new category. Guinness denied the request, saying his project fit squarely under the header of "largest crocheted blanket." Duneier appealed the decision. After more back and forth, he prevailed, with the caveat by Guinness that his square measure at least 10-by-10 meters square.

Recognizing that he was going to need a significant amount of yarn to complete his project, he approached Red Heart, asking for sponsorship. Not long after, 40,000 yards of yarn showed up on his doorstep. The final 60-plus-pound granny square more than meets the requirements laid out by Guinness World Records; as *YMN* went to press, Duneier was still awaiting Guinness's official acknowledgment of his achievement.

Why do something of this magnitude? "If I'm making a big piece for a yarn-bomb, why not make it a little bigger and get a world record too?" Duneier asks. "When they told me how big it needed to be, I miscalculated how far along I was. When I finally realized it, it simply became a new challenge."

To view more of Duneier's work, visit www.yarnbomber.com.

CERTIFIED INSTRUCTORS PROGRAM CELEBRATES

▼ Twelve thousand. That's how many knitters and crocheters have made it through the Craft Yarn Council's rigorous Certified Instructors Program (CIP).

Founded in 1981, the program, which is marking its 35th anniversary, is offered both on-site at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology and via correspondence. "The program gives people the tools they need to help teach others," explains Mary Colucci, CYC's former executive director. "Completing the program makes people feel more comfortable, whether they want to teach friends to knit or to teach professionally."



There are two levels of certification in both the knit and crochet teacher programs. Both levels involve swatching myriad stitches, writing lesson plans, receiving

feedback and testing by a master teacher, and completing fifteen hours of student teaching. Students completing Level II certifications dive more deeply into complicated stitches and pattern writing.

What do teachers get from all of this? A recognition pin and certificates for both levels, the necessary credential (Level I) to teach in the Craft Yarn Council's Discover Class Program at Michaels stores and entry into CYC's teachers' database.

For Susan Leibowitz of Wayne, New Jersey, who took both levels of the knitting and crochet classes at FIT, the CIP program helped her shore up weak areas in her needlework and acquire the skills to teach knitting and crochet full-time.

"It's changed how I make a living," says Leibowitz, who calls her business The Knitting Bureau, for the detective work necessary to solve people's stitching conundrums. "It's wonderful. I really like the social part of knitting and crocheting, the opportunity to make new friends and teach, and to watch people make friends with each other and learn about each other's lives. It's like bringing mini villages of people together."

For more information about certification, visit www.craftyarncouncil.com.

MARKET REPORT

KOLLAGE NEEDLES MOVES NORTH



▼ Last summer, Louet North America of Prescott, Ontario, began manufacturing its first runs of Kolláge Square needles. The company acquired the needle division of Kolláge Yarns earlier this year.

"This was an opportunity to expand the offerings that Louet North America can provide,"

explains Louet President David Van Stralen. For retailers, he says, this acquisition will mean fewer orders and lower shipping costs. "Having all these things under our roof will benefit customers."

Founded by Van Stralen's mother, Trudy, Louet North America is a long-time distributor of Louet spinning wheels and looms, Euroflax and GEMS yarns and myriad patterns. The acquisition of Kolláge needles brings David's son Brett into the family business as the machinist responsible for their manufacture.

Louet North America is rebranding the needles to match the look and feel of their identity but will retain the Kolláge name. The square needles were invented by Susie Moraca to make knitting and crochet more comfortable. The line includes square crochet hooks, circular knitting needles, double points, straight needles and interchangeables with two types of cables. There's also a new line of round needles called Sonix.

"Kolláge needles are a high-quality product, and we wanted to keep it going," Van Stralen says of the decision. "It made a lot of business sense and takes our company a step further into manufacturing."

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

▼ Westminster Fibers Inc., U.S. distributor of Rowan, Schachenmayr, Regia, James Brett and Lopi yarns, has announced that it will no longer distribute these products. In an email to stores, John Arbour, commercial manager of Westminster Fibers Inc., wrote, "After a thorough review of our strategic direction, we decided to cease the distribution of specialty handknitting yarns by the end of 2016."

A subsidiary of Coats, Westminster Fibers Inc. will continue to distribute and support Free Spirit and Rowan Fabric brands. They are still taking orders for yarn through the end of the calendar year.

"This was not an easy decision," he wrote in the same email. "We are striving to make the transition as smooth as possible, with minimal disruption to both the industry and the brands we previously represented." Westminster Fibers declined to comment further.

THE NEW MASON-DIXON KNITTING



▼ When you click on www.masondixonknitting.com these days, you're going to see a lot more than the 13-year-old epistolary blog written by **Ann Shayne** and **Kay Gardiner**. The revamped **Mason-Dixon Knitting**, which premiered in late September, is now more of a knitting-themed *Huffington Post*, with content posted daily about patterns, people, yarn and techniques. "We wanted to create a site on the Internet that was a daily read for knitters," Gardiner said. "There is something about having something new every day."

Inspired by websites such as Food52 and the online version of *The New Yorker*, Shayne and Gardiner longed to create a more robust Mason-Dixon Knitting, but it wasn't until their oldest kids went to college that the two decided the time was right to make MDK their full-time gig.

For longtime fans of the Yankee-Dixie pair,

the new site retains the Mason-Dixon blog but also features content from a who's who of knitting writers and designers. In the same way Food52 sells a curated range of cooking and home goods, MDK will also have an online shop stocked with yarn, patterns and a line of Mason-Dixon Knitting books, edited by Melanie Falick, which they will also wholesale. The first is titled *Stripes*.

Gardiner explained that the Mason-Dixon Knitting store is not a full-service yarn shop but will offer specialty goods and products closely tied to the Mason-Dixon books, such as the Euroflax mini-skein five-packs Louet has produced just for them.

"If we can create a lot more enthusiasm for knitting, that will make everybody in the industry happy," she said. "Everyone gets some benefit from that." www.masondixonknitting



In July, Lion Brand Yarn, located near Union Square in New York City, found itself in the position of being a place where folks can collect yarn balls and PokeBalls. As a designated PokeStop, Lion Brand Yarn has seen an influx of visitors clutching their smartphones and searching for Pokemon characters. The mobile game Pokemon Go, which debuted in early July, is an example of augmented reality; it combines the existing aim of the game Pokemon, to "collect them all," with a mobile app by placing the little creatures within your world. Locations of interest, as determined by the game, are called PokeStops, and at them players can gain PokeBalls (used to collect the Pokemon) and other power-ups.

"Quite a few people have come in with their phones, and they've caught Pokemon here and are really happy," a sales associate explained. "We love it."

Getting into the spirit, on August 30 the bricks-and-mortar studio hosted a Pokemon Go crochet amigurumi class, so customers could learn to crochet their own Pokemon. You can find a collection of amigurumi Pokemon patterns at www.lionbrandyarn studio.com/indexphp/pokemon-party-in-thestudio-adorable-amigurumi-patterns.

IN MEMORIAM Iris Estelle Peacock

▼ Iris Estelle Peacock, who cofounded Estelle Designs and Sales Limited with her husband, died on August 2. Established in 1976, the company originally manufactured stitchery kits that Iris designed. The company eventually grew to become an importer and distributor of lines including Cascade Yarns, Manos del Uruguay and Lang, along with an eponymous line of Estelle Yarns. Peacock's son Chris will continue to run the business.

SOLDIERS IN (CROCHETED) PETTICOATS



▼ Anticipating the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment—which gave American women the right to vote—in 2020, crochet designer and former college professor **Katherine Durack** launched **Suffrage in Stitches**, a multiyear project celebrating the connection between crochet and women's suffrage.

Did our foremothers fight for voting rights with crochet hooks in tow? Not exactly. But in her research, Durack discovered clear connections between the needlearts and first-wave feminism. Whether fundraising for the cause through the sale of hand-stitched items, proudly wearing beautiful needlework or being ridiculed in the media for their stitching, suffragettes crocheted during the early battles for women's rights. "The timelines for the women's suffrage movement converged when standard terms for crochet were evolving," Durack says. "When I searched 'suffrage' plus 'crochet,' I found some cool stuff."

Durack is hoping her efforts—which include a website (www.suffrageinstitches.com), pattern designs inspired by the history of the movement, a trunk show and presentations for yarn shops and small museums—will not only shed light on this somewhat forgotten chapter of American history but will also inspire women to exercise their franchise come November.

"This was a hard-won fight," she says of the 19th Amendment. "People were imprisoned and died to get this right. We need to value the right to vote."

"TINK" GETS INTO OXFORD

▼ Knitters throw the word around like yarn overs. But the insider verb "to tink," which means to unknit (it is, after all, "knit" spelled backward), has made it into one of the lexicons of record, www.oxforddictionaries.com. Announced in a blog post in July, the Oxford Dictionaries described the addition as an example of the "linguistic inventiveness of knitting." Unlike the Oxford English Dictionary, which focuses on how words have changed over time, the Oxford Dictionaries focus on contemporary usage.



MARKET REPORT

CATCH A KNITTING STAR

▼ What if you could attend an event like Stitches or Vogue Knitting LIVE! from the comfort of your couch? You can if you signed up for the Knit Stars Online Knitting Summit, October 10–21. Launched by veteran yarn shop owner **Shelley Brander** of Loops Yarn in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Knit Stars is a virtual learning experience featuring nine top knitting designers and teachers.

Unlike online knitting classes, which offer discrete topic-focused content, the summit aggregates the talents of multiple teachers who will be holding forth on a range of topics. Knit Stars students will have the chance to learn English tailoring techniques and fitting from Julie Weisenberger of Cocoknits; lace knitting, beading and shawl construction from Designs by Romi's Romi Hill; styling and blocking secrets from Meghan Fernandes of Pom Pom Quarterly; and working with art yarns from Amy Small of Knit Collage. And that's just a start.

"By registering for the summit, people have access to all nine knit stars," Brander explains. "You might encounter them at a big show or retreat, but it's very rare when you can actually interact with all of these knitters in the same place. Some don't travel to teach, plus there's the expense to consider."

Shot on location in each teacher's creative space (Stephen West, who lives in Europe, was filmed in New York), the summit not only provides educational content but also a window into each knitter's life and process.

Knit Stars classes roll out one at a time beginning October 10



and can be watched endlessly. During the two-week conference, Knit Stars will also host live online Q&A sessions, and participants can avail themselves of limited-run yarns by the likes of Koigu, Malabrigo and Hedgehog Fibres, among others.

To bring yarn shops into the fold, Knit Stars has created a special section on its website encouraging LYSOs to host scheduled viewing events. As part of the Knit Stars LYS initiative, Shelli Westcott of Knitterly in Petaluma, California, will be sharing some yarnintensive projects that can be used with each Knit Stars' lesson.

"My shop is in Tulsa," Brander says. "It's hard to get people to travel to my store. The summit is a way to be associated with these designers and instructors and to introduce them to my customers."

Brander, who is partnering with Ashley Lurcott, who ran the successful Modern Calligraphy Summit last year, says that to the best of her knowledge, Knit Stars is the industry's first online knitting conference. Registration for the event took place during defined windows of time. During the first week-long time window, 1,000 people signed up. The next window to register will be the first week of October. The cost is \$199.

MEDIA WATCH

v Several films and television shows have debuted of late in which fiber figures heavily.

• **Rams:** An Icelandic film by Grímur Hákonarson, Rams is a dry comedy about two elderly brothers-sheep farmers-who haven't spoken in

in our knitting bags, Yarn breathlessly showcases the work of four women who are using yarn in performance, to create landscapes and disrupt the urban environment. Directed by Montreal-based Icelander Una Lorenzen, the film is narrated by novelist Barbara Kingsolver. For

40 years. When disease infects the flock of one brother and authorities threaten to exterminate the sheep, hilarity and potential reconciliation ensue. Look for gorgeous shots of the Icelandic landscape, sheep and hand-knit lopapeysur. Available now on Blu-Ray, DVD and digital.

• Yarn: The Movie: More of a documentary about artists who use yarn as a medium than about the stuff we carry around



screening info, visit www.yarnfilm.com/screenings. • Shetland: Based on a series of mysteries by British novelist Ann Cleeves, which take place in the Shetland Islands, this series stars Douglas Henshall as Detective Inspector Jimmy Perez. Seasons 1 and 2 are available on DVD: Season 3 is available from the BBC store and iTunes. www.bbc.co.uk/ programmes/p01s711r

YMN CALENDAR

Events to keep you in stitches this fall. (For more, visit www.yarnmarketnews.com.)

October 1–2 Fall Fiber Festival & Montpelier Sheepdog Trials James Madison's Montpelier Montpelier Station, Virginia www.fallfiberfestival.org

October 1–2 Michigan International Alpacafest Summit Sports & Ice Complex Dimondale, Michigan alpacafest.org

October 1–2 Vermont Sheep & Wool Festival Tunbridge Fairgrounds Tunbridge, Vermont vtsheepandwoolfest.com

October 1–2 Wool Festival at Taos Kit Carson Park Taos, New Mexico taoswoolfestival.org

October 3–9 Spinzilla various locations spinzilla.org

October 5–9 The Knitting & Stitching Show Alexandra Palace London, England theknittingandstitchingshow.com/ London

October 5–9 Trailing of the Sheep Festival Various locations Sun Valley, Ketchum and Hailey, Idaho trailingofthesheep.org

October 7–9 Kentucky Wool Festival 48 Concord Caddo Road Falmouth, Kentucky kywoolfest.org

October 8 King's County Fiber Festival Old Stone House & Washington Park Brooklyn, New York kingscountyfiberfestival.org October 8–10 Nordic Knitting Conference with Arne and Carlos Heritage Nordic Museum Seattle, Washington nordicmuseum.org/knitting

October 15–16 Fiber Fusion Northwest Evergreen State Fairgrounds Monroe, Washington fiberfusion.net

October 15–16 New York Sheep & Wool Festival Dutchess County Fairgrounds Rhinebeck, New York sheepandwool.com

October 20–23 Vogue Knitting LIVE! Destination Experience Koigu Wool Designs and The Falls Inn and Spa Walter's Falls, Ontario, Canada knittingdestinations.com/waltersfalls-ontario

October 22–23 Fiber Expo Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds Ann Arbor, Michigan fiberexpo.com

October 22–23 FiberMania Josephine County Fairgrounds Grants Pass, Oregon sojaa.com/page/4109/fibermania

October 27–29 Creativ Festival Metro Toronto Convention Centre Toronto, Ontario, Canada csnf com

October 28–30 Columbia Gorge Fiber Festival Fort Dalles Readiness Center The Dalles, Oregon columbiagorgefiberfestival.com

October 28–30 Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair Western NC Agricultural Center Fletcher, North Carolina saffsite.org

November 2–6 Handweaver's Guild of Boulder Sale & Show Boulder County Fairgrounds Longmont, Colorado handweaversofboulder.org

November 3–6 Camp Stitches Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort and Spa Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico knittinguniverse.com/camp

November 3–6 Men's Midwest Knitting Retreat Circle Pines Center Delton, Michigan mensknittingretreat.com/scheduledevents.html

November 4–5 Ozark Fiber Fling The Conference Center Steelville, Missouri ozarkfiberfling.com

November 4–6 KnitXperience, A Knitters Retreat Graves Mountain Lodge Syria, Virginia carodanfarm.com

November 4–6 Vogue Knitting LIVE! Minneapolis Minneapolis Convention Center Minneapolis, Minnesota vogueknittinglive.com

November 5 East Texas Fiber Festival Pickers Pavilion Lindale, Texas easttexasfiberfestival.weebly.com

November 5–6 The Fiber Festival of New England Mallary Complex at Eastern States Exposition West Springfield, Massachusetts thebige.com/p/agriculture/496 November 5–6

The Royal Alpaca Challenge Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter Perry, Georgia georgia-alpaca.com/royal-alpacachallenge

November 10–16 Geeky Puffin Knit Palooza Mercure Farnham Bush Hotel Farnham, UK geekypuffinknitpalooza. blogspot.com

November 11–13 Carolina Fiber Frolic Community Center Sapphire, North Carolina carolinafiberfrolic.wordpress.com

November 11–13 Knit Fit! Ballard Community Center Seattle, Washington knitfitseattle.com

November 12–13 Maryland Alpaca and Fleece Festival Howard County Fairgrounds West Friendship, Maryland marylandalpacas.org

November 18–19 Creative Hand Show & Sale Old Shawnee Town Shawnee, Kansas creativehandkc.org

November 25–27 Delmarva Wool and Fiber Expo Ocean City Convention Center Ocean City, Maryland woolandfiber.com

November 26–29 The Knitting & Stitching Show Harrogate International Centre Harrogate, UK theknittingandstitchingshow.com/ harrogate

KNITTING AND WINNING

Last summer, Reno yarn shop **Jimmy Beans Wool** landed one of only 29 Facebook Awards in the world for its campaign to promote the film *Eddie the Eagle*. Partnering with Fox Searchlight Pictures, Jimmy Beans worked to mobilize knitting movie fans through yarn-bombs, hand-knit Eddie-themed sweaters for the film's cast and more. The pièce de résistance? A short video written and produced by stars Hugh Jackman

and Taron Egerton in which they coach two beginning knitters in competition. The video, which was posted on Facebook and promoted by Facebook ads, reached about 2.8 million viewers and boosted online business at the yarn retailer by 20 percent. "On an abstract level, it created a phenomenal amount of credibility for yarn," said Laura Zander, who cofounded Jimmy Beans Wool with her husband, Doug.

BOOK REVIEWS

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI AND CAROLYN NOYES

▼ Crochet One-Skein Wonders for Babies

Edited by Judith Durant and Edie Eckman Storey Publishing; \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1612125763

The One-Skein Wonders series is perennially popular, and rightly so: The books are known for packing in



an extraordinary number of patterns that each call for only one skein of yarn. Cro-

yarn. Crocheters will

undoubtedly snap up the latest installment, filled with items for infants and toddlers. Judith Durant and Edie Eckman sensibly divide the wealth of patterns by type: hats in one chapter, booties and socks in another, toys in a third. You'll find plenty of variety—washcloths and bibs, blankets and bags, as well as just about every type of baby clothing imaginable. From the practical to the precious, pastels to brights, acrylic to cotton to wool, crocheters of all skill levels will find something to create and give to a special babe.

▼ The Complete Surprise By Cully Swansen Schoolhouse Press; \$24.98 ISBN: 978-0942018394

Elizabeth Zimmermann left the knitting world many iconic patterns, foremost among them her Baby Surprise Jacket, an ingenious method of crafting a garter-stitch baby cardigan that doesn't look like a jacket until a few clever folds re-



veal its structure. Now EZ's grandson, Cully Swansen, has written the defini-

tive manual on the Surprise Jacket. Knitters who've never made one will learn the essential techniques in the first chapter, whipping up a charming scarf along the way, then can enjoy making the classic baby version. A chapter dedicated to sizing up the jacket paves the way for child and adult versions—and then creativity takes wing. One chapter shows how to knit a two-color Surprise Jacket in the round; another chapter breaks down methods for customizing fit; and the last two chapters offer new variations on the classic design, such as a dress, a bolero/shrug and a snuggle suit with bonnet for baby.

▼ Knit Superheroes By Rebecca Danger Martingale & Co.; \$22.99 ISBN: 978-1604686128

Rebecca Danger has made a name for herself knitting monsters and other scary critters, but her latest



is devoted to the good guys: superheroes. Whether your taste

runs to the

pattern book

masked, the caped or both, these courageous critters are ready to save the day-the knitting day, that is. Danger includes one human hero (the whimsically monikered Landon Ludwig, Wonder Kid), while the rest of the gang (including alligator, raccoon, giraffe and lion) hail from the adorable section of the animal kingdom. Each features charming details such as striped pantaloons, lace-up sneakers, even a cape with a lightning bolt blazoned across the back. Patterns include plenty of closeup photos, step-by-step directions, even a paragraph describing the habits and personality of the superhero. These heroic and huggable crusaders will surely thrill kids and adults alike.

▼ Colorful Crochet By Therese Hagstedt Trafalgar Square Books; \$21.95

ISBN: 978-1570767135 Combine rainbow-bright hues of yarn with a whimsical sense of style, and you've got Therese Hagstedt's freshly translated book, *Colorful Crochet*. Featuring 60-plus designs for adults, kids and the home, this resource also includes tips, inspiration, how-tos and, as the title suggests, plenty of color. Patterns range from the small and quick flower-shaped barrette toppers and granny-square bracelets—to wearables like a lovely floral shawl, a cross-front



sweater, and funky wristers and caps. Plenty of home-décor projects, like a gorgeous

patchwork-style bedcover and granny-square pillows, allow you to show off your colorful creations. The author's artistic eye—she's a wellknown designer, blogger and photographer in her native Sweden—make every project a delight.

▼ Kids' Knitting Workshop By Susan B. Anderson Artisan; \$17.95 ISBN: 978-1579655907

"Each one, teach one," goes the saying, and if you've ever had a hankering to teach a child how to knit, you'll want to begin with a copy of Susan B. Anderson's handy and helpful guide. Designed for children ages 8 to 12—and the adults who teach them—Anderson's workshopstyle book lays out the basic skills of knitting in a friendly and accessible way. Each technique is broken down into steps, with easy-to-follow illustrations for visual learners. In addition to teaching all the nuts and bolts, the savvy Anderson includes



instruction in skills that will help kids understand the big picture, like how to read a knit-

ting pattern and how to fix common mistakes. Stylish but simple-toexecute projects are interspersed throughout, allowing kids to build confidence as they create hats, bracelets and other small projects. Although aimed at an audience of younger kids, teens and adults will also appreciate the engaging approach embodied in this useful book.

▼ The Beginner's Guide to Writing Knitting Patterns By Kate Atherley Interweave/F+W; \$27.99 ISBN: 978-1632504340

With the goal of creating an easy-tofollow knitting pattern, Kate Atherley, Knitty.com's managing technical editor, delineates how to properly communicate sizing, materials and bodymeasurement information, how to juggle multiple sizes and versions, and how to present stitch patterns in both written and charted form. She also includes information (not lessons) on how best to present schematics and stitch charts as well as the actual layout of the pattern.



Though geared toward knitters interested in making the move from following others' patterns to designing and writing their

own for sharing, selling or submitting to publications, this guide is also a good reference for any knitter who wants to better understand the language of patterns and the experienced designer looking to improve pattern-writing skills.

▼ Yarn-i-tec-ture By Jillian Moreno Storey Publishing; \$29.95 ISBN: 978-1612125213

Knitters, beware! If you've had even the slightest thought of making your own yarn, just a glance at this book could have you binge-buying batts and braids. (If you're already a spinner, prepare to be further enabled.) Moreno, editor of Knitty.com's Knittyspin, compares the process of spinning a yarn to that of building a house—from the blueprint (vision of the finished yarn) to the foundation (fiber choice) to the painting (dyeing) and details how all the components interact to turn raw fiber into a finished handspun varn. Yarn•i•tec•ture is not a how-to



primer for new spinners. That said, all skill levels will learn how to "read" yarn understanding the fiber

and how its prep, draft, twist and ply affect a finished knitted piece. So, whether you're an experienced spinner aiming to produce a specific yarn for a specific project or a knitter who wants to learn how to better



evaluate commercial or handspun yarns, Moreno provides abundant technical information and creative inspiration—and a dozen designer patterns for handspun as well.

100 Little Knitted Gifts to Make Search Press; \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1782212911

100 Little Crocheted Gifts to Make Search Press; \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1782213338

When the occasion calls for a gift, is



your first thought "I'll make something," sending you to sift through your stash? These eclectic pattern collec-

tions, from a variety of designers and for all skill levels and recipients (ba-



bies, kids and adults), include phone cases and food (asparagus stalks, anyone?), booties and boot toppers,

mug hugs and tea cozies, cuddly bears, cupcakes and beaded blackberries. There are use-everyday, oneof-a-kind presents too, including wristers, scarves and beanies. Yarn requirements for the projects are not brand-specific; rather, a suggested yarn weight and yardage are given to help you make the right stash pick.

▼ Customize Your Knitting: Adjust to Fit • Embellish to Taste By Margaret Hubert Creative Publishing International; \$22.99

ISBN: 978-1589238862

The book's tagline, "adjust to fit, embellish to taste," hints at the recipe style of Hubert's latest offering to help knitters get the best fit in what they knit. She explains that many patterns are based on a rectangular bodice shape, so it's no wonder that knitters often end up with a nicely knitted garment that doesn't fit very well. In just a few sentences, she boosts readers'



patterncustomizing confidence by showing which elements of a pattern to alter or measurements to

combine differently to get the body shape-hourglass, triangle, inverted triangle-that suits you. Illustrated tips are useful during knitting (how to keep a stitch pattern intact through increases and decreases, how to fix a dropped stitch), through finishing (seaming, installing a zipper) and on to wearing (shoring up a droopy shoulder). Bonus for firsttime garment knitters: For each of the 16 modeled sample sweaters there is a photo of the finished knitted pieces pinned to a blocking board, so you can clearly see the customized details.

▼ Cable Left, Cable Right: 94 Knitted Cables By Judith Durant Storey Publishing: \$16.95 ISBN: 978-1612125169

Judith Durant's clever book of cables is little only in physical size; inside you'll find scads of technical knowledge along with instructions for a whopping 94 cable patterns. Start by mastering cable terminology and stitch patterns, learn how to make



left- and rightleaning twists, then cable to your heart's content with the plethora of pattern stitches pro-

vided. Durant explores simple cables first, then moves on to more complex patterns, including angles, curves, braids and pretzels. You'll even find valuable information about how to add beads, work two-color cables, add texture, increase and decrease in pattern, and balance out patterns, giving you extra bang for your buck. The book's clever spiral binding and handy size make it perfect for slipping into your knitting bag so you can twist and turn your way wherever you choose to knit.

▼ New Heights in Lace Knitting: 17 Lace Knit Accessory Patterns By Andrea Jurgrau Interweave/F+W; \$24.99

ISBN-13: 978-1632502315

Andrea Jurgrau is a nurse by day, so you might think she'd reach for mindless knitting to relax with in her off time, but in this, her second book of lace knitting, she again



makes the case for the all-absorbing, comforting nature of working lace. Her accessory projects span skill levels, with

mitts and beanies that work well as introductory patterns for beginners —who might then choose to move on to the more intricate Diamond Dust Wrap or a design that incorporates subtle beading. But no matter the knitter's skill level, some of Jurgrau's projects are not for the faint of chart—while the instructions themselves are written, all designs require chart-reading know-how to work the lace.

▼ Knit a Square: Create a Cuddly Creature

By Nicky Epstein Nicky Epstein Books/SoHo Publishing Company; \$19.95 ISBN: 978-1942021667

Nicky Epstein's creativity knows no



bounds, and in her latest book she shows it off with great success. Knit a simple square—and a few em-

bellishments—fold it up, seam it together, and you can have any one of 35 stuffed animals, from an armadillo to an octopus. With this innovative construction, knitters work only flat, making this a great introduction to toy making. Fair Isle, novelty yarn, textured stitch patterns and even the addition of beads will stretch a knitter's skills and allow for a wider array of creatures to be knit. Photos include every piece to make an animal; clear charts and diagrams accompany each pattern.

BESTSELLER WATCH

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

Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

- 1. Drop-Dead Easy Knits, by Gale Zucker (Clarkson Potter)
- 2. You Can Knit That, by Amy Herzog (Harry N. Abrams)
- 3. Curls 2, by Hunter Hammersen (Pantsville Press)
- 4. Norah Gaughan's Knitted Cable Sourcebook (Harry N. Abrams)
- 5. Yarn•i•tec•ture, by Jillian Moreno (Storey)
- 7. Stitch 'n Bitch, by Debbie Stoller (Workman)

Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

- 1. A to Z Crochet (Martingale & Co.)
- 3. Top-Down Crochet Sweaters, by Dora Ohrenstein (Storey)
- 5. Crochet to Calm, by the editors of Interweave (Interweave/F+W)
- 6. Mandalas to Crochet, by Haafner Linssen (St. Martin's Griffin)
- **9.** *Crochet One-Skein Wonders*, edited by Judith Durant and Edie Eckman (Storey)

Barnes & Noble Knitting List

- 1. You Can Knit That, by Amy Herzog (Harry N. Abrams)
- 2. Knitlandia, by Clara Parkes (STC Craft)
- 3. Highland Knits, by the editors of Interweave (Interweave/F+W)
- 4. The Knitter's Book of Knowledge, by Debbie Bliss (Lark Crafts)
- 6. 400 Knitting Stitches (Potter Craft)

YARN FORWARD

BEYOND BASIC

In this industry, the bedrocks—affordable all-purpose yarns are the blockbusters. Here we share top companies' best-selling yarns, shown in the current top colors.

By Christina Behnke PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCUS TULLIS

Plymouth Yarn Co. Encore Worsted (shown in 1386 Christmas Red) Specs: 134 colors; 75% acrylic/

25% wool; 200yds/100g Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 8 needles

Distinctions: The flagship yarn in a family of weights and styles—including chunky, tweed and chunky tweed—Encore Worsted is said to be America's best-selling yarn. Affordable and washer- and dryer-friendly, this bouncy 3-ply incorporates just enough wool for a fleecy feel. **Projects:** Think babies, blankets or beginners—anywhere easy care deserves a special touch. The palette and crisp definition produce stunning crochet colorwork.



Tahki Yarns Cotton Classic

(shown in 3449 Bright Pink) Specs: 125+ colors; 100% mercerized cotton; 108yds/50g

Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 6 needles Distinctions: Just as Cotton Classic abides within the industry, the yarn itself holds up beautifully to repeated washings. The secret: Its cable-spun construction, which lends resilience —and elasticity—to the cotton fiber. The array of colors is simply dazzling. **Projects:** The firm, tubular twist makes this a wonderful crochet cotton. Affordable enough for blankets and market bags, it also holds its shape in cardis and camis.

HiKoo/Skacel Collection CoBaSi

(shown in 010 Deep Turquoise) **Specs:** 33 colors; 55% cotton/21% elastic nylon/16% bamboo/8% silk; 220yds/50g **Gauge:** 26–32 sts = 4" on U.S. 1–4 needles **Distinctions:** CoBaSi proves that wool-free sock yarn is not only possible, it might even be preferable. Each of the three plies features cotton/bamboo/silk-blend threads wrapped around elastic strands, creating the necessary combination of breathability, elasticity and strength.

Projects: What's good for summer socks is good for summer garments. The perky stitch definition and inherent drape pair especially well in lacy wraps.

Universal Yarn Deluxe Worsted Naturals (shown in 40003 Musket Natural Undyed) Specs: 138 colors (5 undyed); 100% wool; 220yds/100g Gauge: 16–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–9 needles

Distinctions: One of the most affordable 4-ply pure wools on the market, Deluxe Worsted is the centerpiece of a collection including varieties such as tweed, superwash and chunky-weight—plus combinations thereof. Blocking transforms the crisp, toothy hand into a soft, cohesive fabric. **Projects:** Though the color choices multiply each year, the natural shades have proven most popular. Still, the texture is perfect for colorwork, especially steeked cardigans.



Debbie Bliss/KFI Baby Cashmerino (shown in 601 Baby Pink) Specs: 53 colors; 55% merino wool/33% microfiber/12% cashmere; 136yds/50g Gauge: 25 sts = 4" on U.S. 3 needles

Distinctions: Thanks to the S-on-S twist construction typical of Italian-spun merino and the cachet of its namesake, Baby Cashmerino—machine-washable, buttery soft and available in a range of tasteful pastels—carries an air of luxury. **Projects:** Anything for baby, or harness microfiber's moisture-wicking properties in a summery top. Naturally, beautiful pattern support abounds.

Filatura Di Crosa/Tahki-Stacy Charles Zara (shown in 1468 Charcoal Heather) Specs: 57 colors; 100% extrafine merino superwash; 136yds/50g Gauge: 23 sts = 4" on U.S. 4-6 needles

Distinctions: To many, Zara is the gold standard for superwash extrafine merino. A classic example of the S-on-S crepe spin for which Italian mills are known, which augments merino's smooth, powdery hand, Zara features a full range of yarn weights synonymous with Euro chic.

Projects: This buoyantly rounded DK-weight forms plush, pillowy stitches that look divine in texture patterns, especially cables and ribbing.

Classic Elite Yarns Liberty Wool (shown in 78197 Dusty Teal)

Specs: 99 solids and multis; 100% washable wool; 122yds/50g

Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7 needles

Distinctions: What sets Liberty Wool apart is its satin softness and patina, a result of the superwash descaling process. While the steady 4-ply twist yields well-defined stitches, the painterly self-striping colorways offer art appeal to knitters and crocheters alike.

Projects: Soft enough for next-to-skin garments and accessories, the 50-gram put-up is ideal for stranded colorwork. Or try colorblocking a multishade with a coordinating solid.

yarn reviews continue on page 18

BEYOND BASIC

Cascade Yarns Cascade 220 (shown in 9404 Ruby) Specs: 117 colors; 100% Peruvian Highland wool; 220yds/100g

Gauge: 18–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–8 needles **Distinctions:** Those who say that "99 cents" is history's greatest marketing tool have never heard of Cascade 220. Behind the reliably generous yardage, even 4-ply twist and unmatched color selection is spongy, high-crimp Highland wool, which blooms into a cohesive, lustrous fabric. **Projects:** For all its versatility, 220 is very much a sweater yarn. Colorwork is an obvious choice, but textured pattern stitches perform equally well.

Rowan Pure Wool Superwash Worsted (shown in 112 Moonstone) Specs: 68 colors and tonals; 100% wool; 219yds/100g Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7 needles

Distinctions: Pure Wool Superwash Worsted retains the loft, crimp and understated luster of robust untreated wool. Superwash devotees may find it overly rugged, but purists will appreciate an up-to-snuff wool that won't shrink at the sight of a washing machine. **Projects:** This springy 4-ply conforms to a variety of techniques: cables, colorwork, even simple lace. Priced on the higher side, it's



Brown Sheep **Co.** Lamb's Pride Worsted

Berroco Vintage (shown in 5106 Smoke)

Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7 needles

affordability and machine-washability.

nylon; 218yds/100g

the balance.

Specs: 86 colors; 52% acrylic/40% wool/8%

Distinctions: Even natural-fiber purists love

Vintage: This sleek 4-ply is so woolly, it still

mingles a generous dose of wool and some

maintains a hint of lanolin fragrance. The blend

silky, supple nylon with just enough acrylic for

Projects: Gift projects ought to have an heirloom

quality, but let's be honest: We want recipients

to wear (read: wash) them, too. Vintage strikes

(shown in M115 Oatmeal) **Specs:** 98 solids and multis; 85% wool/15% mohair; 190yds/113g **Gauge:** 18 sts = 4" on U.S.

8 needles

Distinctions: Most think of USA-made Lamb's Pride Worsted as a workhorse and it is. But a closer look reveals a handsome, glossy single that shimmers with strands of mohair. Firm yet bouncy, it etches crisp stitches suffused with a distinctive hairy halo. **Projects:** Famous for felting and great for housewares and warm, sturdy garments, Lamb's Pride, like any single, also loves crochet.









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THE NATIONAL NEEDLEARTS ASSOCIATION



GWEN BORTNER, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Winds of Change & Brights Things to Come

t has been a whirlwind season for members of TNNA. Our summer show in Washington. D.C., was a great success: More than 1,200 members were in attendance, served by more than 200 vendors on the trade-show floor. As usual, the weekend featured myriad educational opportunities and plenty of fun activities. We presented awards for excellence in the needlearts, innovative new products, and most creative booth displays. And, of course, our members had valuable time to network with like-minded business owners

The big excitement around TNNA is that we recently hired a new association management company to oversee our regular events and coordinate our membership functions. We are so excited to be partnering with the innovators at SmithBucklin to bring our goals to fruition and carry TNNA into a bright future. One of the most enticing aspects of this partnership is that SmithBucklin offers a dedicated education resources team, which will work with the TNNA leadership to expand and enhance the educational opportunities for the membership, at events and throughout the year.

Of course, we have long been concerned with the education of our members, and one way we've been serving you is through our 2016 webinar series. The webinars are one-hour classes led by industry experts and designed with needlearts business owners in mind. (Class topics include pricing, accounting, social media, newsletters and more.) TNNA members receive half off the class price, but these webinars are open to non-member business owners as well; for more information, visit TNNA.org/ webinars.

This year we also partnered with Hart Business Research to provide our members with an unbiased and authoritative study of the needlearts industry. These detailed survey results, available exclusively to members of TNNA, provide us with a wealth of information about the business side of needlearts as well as our customers' preferences and desires. We hope all of our members will take advantage of

this information and use it to further their own business goals.

As we head into the fall, we're getting excited for one of our big events: the annual Spinzilla competition. Spinzilla is a spinning contest for which teams of spinners come together to set their wheels in motion and raise funds for a good cause. This is a fabulous opportunity to support the next generation of spinners through the Needle Arts Mentoring Program, sponsored by TNNA, and we have a lot of fun doing it. Last year our participants collectively spun more than five million yards of yarn. Can we beat that number this year? There's still plenty of time to register; for more information, visit the Spinzilla website at Spinzilla.org

There has never been a better time to be a member of TNNA. We look forward to wrapping up the 2016 calendar year with exciting new projects and partnerships as we prepare for our next show, in January. If you'd like more information on TNNA membership options, visit our website at TNNA.org.

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Heritage 2 Ply

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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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YARN GROUP

BY COURTNEY KELLEY, CHAIR



Stitch It Forward

s we near the end of the warmweather slow season in the Northern Hemisphere, we should be starting to feel some relief: Gardening season is drawing to a close, and customers who disappeared to summer vacation homes are starting to trickle back into the store to look at what you've been busy preparing for them.

At the TNNA trade show in Washington, D.C., in June we saw lots of fantastic new yarns for fall. The trends are for fibers that are woolly, rustic and soft as butter—like Blue Sky Fibers' new Woolstok and The Fibre Co.'s new tweed Arranmore, both classic-looking wools with a soft feel, perfect for making sweaters, another growing trend. Our favorite hand-dyed variegated yarns, as well as some newbies, are still going strong, from Koigu and Lorna's Laces to new exhibitors MJ Yarns and Three Irish Girls. There was no shortage of choices for lovers of color on the show floor.

At the Yarn Group meeting on the Sunday

of the show, we started off with a presentation and panel discussion on the latest State of the Needlearts Industry survey, which is available to members at TNNA.org. Many thanks to our panelists, Kathy Elkins (Webs, Northampton, Massachusetts), Jaime Jennings (Fancy Tiger Crafts, Denver, Colorado) and Danielle Romanetti (Fibre Space, Alexandria, Virginia). We announced our new Yarn Group website (www.yarngroup.org), which includes a local yarn shop finder for the public, a calendar of events and a news feed packed with industry news. We hope our members find this to be a benefit to the industry.

Also discussed was planning for I Love Yarn Day, scheduled this year for October 15. Show your support of yarn and Stitch It Forward. The campaign is designed to get your customers excited to share their craft with others. Encourage your customers to "stitch it forward" by bringing friends to your shop to teach them to knit or crochet. Be creative, and encourage your customers to participate in this important day. Find out more at www.craftyarncouncil. com/I-Love-Yarn and stay tuned to the Yarn Group blog for more information on myriad ways you can participate.

Many of you have heard that TNNA recently hired a new association management company, SmithBucklin. We are excited about what they will be able to do to ensure us strong future growth. From an in-house website and graphic design, a membership outreach team and a dedicated education team, our new management company is positioned to help TNNA serve you.

We are already working hard to plan our next show, in San Jose, California, from January 21–23, 2017. Mark your calendars: This is definitely a show you won't want to miss. In the meantime, check the TNNA website for upcoming webinars and more teaching tools that will help you run your business successfully.

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.



SPINNING & WEAVING GROUP

BY RITA PETTEYS, CHAIRPERSON



Hearts and Hands

pinzilla has grown so much since its inception, in 2013, as a grassroots event. That year, organizers had hoped for 10 teams and 100 spinners. But 600 intrepid spinners joined in the first Spinzilla, and the event has been cemented in the hearts and hands of fiber fanatics since. Last year, 1,770 spinners from around the world participated.

Spinzilla's reach is wide and can continue to grow with enthusiastic support from the entire fiber arts community. The event doesn't have to be relegated to the first week of October; there are plenty of opportunities to use the miles of handspun your team members and customers spin during Spinzilla for post-event fun, fellowship, community building and learning.

Show spinners how to use their handspun in patterns that call for commercial yarn. Bridge the knowledge gap by hosting workshops, fashion shows and show-and-tells highlighting patterns that use handspun yarn. Ask your customers and team members to share their handspun and hand-knit, -crocheted or -woven items, perhaps showing them in a special display, emphasizing the fiber, spinning and plying techniques, wraps per inch, gauge and other pertinent details.

Another option is hosting a learn-along, for which spinners bring in their yarn and the group works to find appropriate patterns and resources. Your customers will grow their skills by learning about wraps per inch and how that works. Knitty.com, for example, has the Knitty Spin pattern line, with approximately 90 patterns that work with handspun. Once patterns and projects are chosen, host a knit-, crochet- or weave-along on a common project, possibly one that offers a range of gauge possibilities so it appeals to those whose handspun yarn spans a range of thicknesses and lengths. Hopefully, using these ideas for continuing the excitement of Spinzilla will help your customers, team members and greater community increase their knowledge and love of hand spinning.

Speaking of increasing the knowledge and love of hand spinning and weaving, there is great news from the Needle Arts Mentoring Program, which is supported in part by money raised during Spinzilla. Since the 2014 introduction of spinning and weaving kits, we've witnessed an explosion in the number of programs using spinning and weaving materials provided by NAMP. Six months after the introduction of the kits, 303 children were weaving and 353 children were spinning. So far in 2016, we've seen an increase in both new programs and in existing programs that have added spinning and weaving, doubling those who are spinning and tripling those who are weaving.

Thank you to all who support this endeavor through their event organization, spinning, sponsorship and team hosting. To learn more about Spinzilla, go to www.spinzilla.org. More information about the Needle Arts Mentoring Program can be found at www.needlearts mentoring.org.

The goal of the Spinning & Weaving Group is to ensure a vibrant marketplace by promoting the joys of hand spinning and weaving. We are always looking for volunteers to help execute our vision. For more information, go to spinweave.org and see how you can become involved.

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CRAFT YARN COUNCIL

BY JENNY BESSONETTE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Thinking Big for Fall

hat is the number one item knitters and crocheters love to make? Scarves, of course, and consumer research conducted since 2009 confirms it. So when CYC and its members started spotting Super Scarves on fashion runways and in shops, they immediately organized a campaign to capitalize on this trend. We see it as an opportunity to ignite retail yarn sales this fall.

What is a Super Scarf? It is any scarf that is substantially larger than usual. However, the Super Scarf is more about a look than a specific size. If you Google "Super Scarf," you'll see an image of Lenny Kravitz wearing a rather large scarf with long fringe. But it could also be a big scarf made with extra-thick yarn on giant knitting needles or a big puffy cowl.

To inspire newbies and veterans alike, CYC is working with its members to truly embrace Super Scarves and promote them during the fall yarn-selling season. The campaign will involve a big push on social media and have a video component. Planning started in the spring, with CYC companies developing a design brief that outlined details of the Super Scarf. Designers then went to work creating new patterns, planning for a September release. All members of the Council, including yarn and accessories companies, publishers and online-class companies, are promoting Super Scarves on their websites and through patterns, social media and newsletters to inspire and engage knitters and crocheters with something quick, fun and trendy.

CYC developed many key areas for promoting the Super Scarf trend. First, we researched #superscarf to develop a baseline for tracking growth throughout the season. We started pinning Super Scarf photos in June; in just one week, we had 473 followers. The photos will be followed by articles and blog posts, along with street and studio photography. Several CYC members will be creating Super Scarf videos featuring pattern tutorials and ways to wear a Super Scarf. To reach the younger consumer, Craft Yarn Council will also focus on marketing to teens (back-to-school outfits) and millennials (how to wear your super scarf to work).

What is so appealing about this campaign is the fact that scarves are essential fashion accessories for all ages and, for our industry, all skill levels. Whether a knitter or crocheter works with a richly textured yarn, hand-dyed or solid yarn, even with a basic stitch, the finished scarf looks beautiful.

If yarn stores across the country tie in with the Super Scarf promotion, the impact of this campaign will increase exponentially. Consider designing window and in-store displays of Super Scarf models; organizing Super Scarf fashion shows, including pointers on wearing larger scarves; holding a class on different edgings; appealing to teens and college students by promoting Super Scarves in school colors; playing up the trend on social media; or tying the campaign to I Love Yarn Day celebrations.

If we succeed in our plans, you'll be seeing Super Scarves everywhere you look this fall. We ask you and your customers to join us as we give an already popular trend a CYC-worthy boost.

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



RAVELRY

BY MARY HEATHER BROWNE, VP OF OPERATIONS AND DO-GOODER



In-Store Pattern Sales

t the TNNA show in Washington, D.C., last summer, we were happy to have the chance to exhibit within our Ravelry Help! booth, from which we were able to answer questions and assist attendees with their Ravelry needs in real time. Speaking with local yarn store owners is always a highlight of the show for us, and this year we were thrilled by how many of you are using the In-Store Pattern Sales program successfully in your shops and grateful for the feedback you shared. We have already implemented a few shop-related improvements based on the ideas you gave us at the show.

A frequent In-Store Sales-related request from store owners is the ability to quickly make additional sales using the service. Shops often need to sell additional copies of the same pattern to multiple customers, as well as quickly purchase multiple different patterns for a single customer. After completing a purchase, you'll now find links that will allow you to do each of these tasks efficiently.

Printing of patterns that are available in

multiple languages was also an issue for a number of shops, because pdfs in every language would print at once. Now you'll see previews of each individual language's file and be able to choose the one you are looking for. Local Yarn Store directory pages have also been revamped and made public. Now, you don't need to be logged in to Ravelry to view an LYS directory page, and it will be viewable in Internet searches. The first photo on your shop's Photos tab is now featured prominently on your main shop page. LYS directory listings are free; ensuring they have quality photos and accurate information (including store hours and contact information) is an easy way to give people a feel for your shop and entice them to visit.

Another improvement we've added to shop directory pages is a link that allows customers to search the In-Store Pattern Sales that are available through your shop. As long as your customers are logged in to Ravelry, they can click on the link and browse through an advanced search of the patterns you have available in-store.

From January through June of this year, shops sold more than 70,500 patterns through Ravelry's In-Store Pattern Sales. The most popular pattern sold through shops is Martina Behm's Hitchhiker, followed by Waiting for Rain by Silvia Bo Bilvia and Joji Locatelli's 3-Color Cashmere Shawl. Shawls and wraps were the most popular category for the first half of 2016, making up 45 percent of all the patterns sold through this service. Sweaters make up 14 percent of sales, with cardigans slightly more popular than pullovers. Scarves rounded out the top three categories, with 13 percent. Looking at attributes, 17 percent were for baby and child patterns and 13 percent were for patterns for men; 42 percent of In-Store Pattern Sales customers purchased seamless patterns, with "one piece" and "worked in the round" being other very popular attributes.

We value your feedback and want to know how the In-Store Pattern Sales service is working for your store. Please join us in the Ravelry Shopkeepers Group to share your ideas and questions. We are always happy to help.

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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CRAFT & HOBBY ASSOCIATION





Learn, Connect, Discover

he Craft & Hobby Association is the very heart of creativity. We bring the entire creative community together to learn, connect and discover so that trade professionals and businesses have all the tools they need to thrive in today's marketplace. Our focus is on the present and the future; our mission is to inspire the next generation of creatives. And, best of all, our work comes from the heart.

One way we can help you find success is at Creativation, our new annual event, formally known as the CHA MEGA Conference and Trade Show. We invite you to the next Creativation, January 19-23, 2017, at our new home at the Phoenix [Arizona] Convention Center. For 2017, we're building a vibrant city on the show floorthe capital of the creative products industry. Following is a preview of our new event and all the reasons you'll want to join us.

LEARN: Enroll in CHA University, the new mecca of education. Discover new ways to turn ideas into action from high-demand speakers in

our seminars and workshops. Among the many offerings is the Pantone Color Trends Seminar. When design decisions are being made, the guestion inevitably arises about the right color direction to take. What path will drive success and consumer satisfaction? Learn how to better assess and gauge your customers' aspirations and lifestyle needs and to encourage the use of invigorated color palettes.

Also on tap is "Pinspiration-Where Community, Makers and Millennials Meet Creativity." Learn how Brooke Roe bridged the online and physical worlds to appeal to the community, makers and millennials by creating the world's first Pinterest-inspired bricks-and-mortar makerspace. She will share ideas about how to turn any creative workspace into a welcoming atelier.

Be there for our keynote presentation, as the long-awaited 2016 Size of the Craft Industry Report is unveiled. This dynamic presentation will reveal findings that highlight the size of the creative products opportunity, spending patterns of

crafters, their demographic profiles and the attitudes they have toward their creative activities.

CONNECT: Come to Phoenix to network with makers, influencers, bloggers, friends and business partners. Experience the latest products and trends in the yarn market and the greater creative arts products industry. Make your next big deal happen in our fun, friendly and inspiring global community.

DISCOVER: Visit the Innovations Center to discover never-before-seen ideas, trends, methods, techniques and devices through new handson and interactive displays.

Experience the power of creative collaboration as traditional crafting and technology collide in our Makerspace. Stop here to experiment with stateof-the-art equipment and crafting tools and find inspiration in our iDiscover Chats, modeled after TedTalks-short, informative and exciting. Registration for Creativation is open. Education begins January 19; the show floor is open from January 21-23. Visit CreativationShow.org to register.

The Craft & Hobby Association is the premier trade association for the creative arts products industry. Learn, connect and discover more at craftandhobby.org and creativationshow.org.



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SMART INVENTORY

Plan for Profit

Use comparative sales and sales projections to prepare your inventory for holidays and events.

s the leaves fall and a chill touches the air, many turn back to their knitting needles and crochet hooks for the comfort and coziness they provide. This time of the year, packed with fiber events and important holidays, is key for an LYS. Good planning can propel your business into the new year.

Time Your Stock

Planning for an event is best started well in advance, which is why it's essential that you keep an ordering calendar. As a baseline for the latest date you should begin planning for an event, choose the vendor with the longest lead time. Count back the number of weeks' lead time from the date you want to receive the product; give yourself at least four months of lead time to prepare. To have your store stocked in September with seasonally appropriate items from a vendor with a fourteen-week lead time, begin ordering and planning no later than late April or early May.

If you're planning for the fall and winter holidays, think of the arc of the season and be sure you have the right items on hand. Earlier in the season, people are more ambitious with their gift knitting. By December, they'll have moved on to bulky oneskein projects and gift items. Category management really comes into play here: Evaluate your stock using last year's sales data to ensure you're selecting the right mix of seasonal items and gifts.

Not all events have the scope of the holiday season, but they still benefit from good planning. A local yarn crawl can bring in new customers and generate interest in your shop. Whatever your featured yarn is, make sure you have enough of the color your sample is in, communicating with vendors in advance to guarantee their supply is sufficient. Don't make a shop sample in a colorway in low supply.

For trunk shows, communicate with your vendor to guarantee you have the print patterns or books you need, and know whether they are also available on Ravelry In-Store Pattern Sales. Ensure you have good stock on the colorways featured in the samples during the event.

A detail easily missed for events is the small items that increase basket size. Prepare by providing plenty of easy additions to a purchase. Stock snips or scissors, stitch markers and measuring tapes, and display them by the register. Whenever possible, engage the reps that help with your orders and introduce you to new products that inspire you. They're knowledgeable about the vendors they represent and are a tremendous help when you're featuring one of their brands

Spend Appropriately

Sales projections—an educated guess based on previous years' sales and recent comparative sales -can lend you the confidence to make purchases four months in advance. When making a projection, you need recent comparative sales. Let's make a simple example: Say July 2015 = \$100 and July 2016 = \$115. The equation for determining the comparative sales is: [(recent sales/previous vear's sales) -1 x 100 = comparative sales %, or in this example, [(115/100) - 1] x 100 = 15% positive sales increase. The next step is creating the sales projection. Use a few months of recent comparative sales to create a recent average. We'll use a +12% recent average. Take the sales number from last year's event (for example, \$100) and multiply by 1.12 (i.e., \$100 x 1.12 = \$112) for your sales projection. It's likely you will fall within very close range of this number.

Now apply this information for planning purposes. If your projection is for 12%, like the example above, plan conservatively for an increase of 8 to 10%. With these sales projections you can determine your purchasing budget, or "open to buy." With a baseline keystone of 50%, use the projected sales x .48 to determine your open to buy total. A conservative open to buy prevents overspending. With a flat or negative sales projection, consider using the full 50%, but don't overspend. Order thoughtfully using all the data you have from category management reports.

How do you direct your spending now that you know how much you can spend? Process a sales report from a previous event and use that data, adjusted by the projected increase or decrease, to create informed seasonal pars. (Pars are the ideal quantity of an item to avoid out of stocks.)

It is important to have appropriate stock levels. Any out-of-stocks are revenue that you're not earning, particularly if it's a yarn you've featured in a sample. Make a habit of spending time after each event or season to record what did or didn't yield

BY KIMBERLY AGBAYANI

success. This action can have lasting positive impact for your business. It's easy to assume you'll remember the important details. Add information about sales and staffing to your post-event record, and you have a guide for next year or the next event. After all this forethought, planning and organization, you'll be free to enjoy the season, your personal fiber projects and your community of customers.

Report Cards

A thorough report is worth every minute you give it. If possible, get reflections from your staff as well. Your report should include the following information:

- Title and date of the event.
- Special guest fees, if applicable.

How did it go? What went well? What didn't work? What can you do differently?
Sales data. What were your gross sales? How did sales compare to last year's event? Did you offer any discounts? How was your margin? Did you feature particular items? If so, provide specific sales data regarding those items.

• Stock conditions. How did ordering go? What were your best sellers? Did you run out of anything? Did you over-purchase anything? Was there a product category that was lacking?

Any doorbuster gifts or door prizes. Remember to contact winners if necessary.
Staffing. What were the busiest times of the day? Did you have too much or not enough staff? How was staff morale? What percentage of your gross sales was your labor expense?

• Overall, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?

And don't forget to follow up—send thankyou notes to any people or vendors who helped in a special way.

Kimberly Agbayani is the Operations and Inventory Manager at Tolt Yarn and Wool in Carnation, Washington. Ask your local distributor about Zealana AIR lace weight.

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SMART LEGAL

Private Practices

How a privacy policy protects you and your customers.

ou've encountered online privacy policies countless times: the tiny type near the bottom of a website, or a pop-up box full of legalese that asks you to check "accept" before continuing. Or maybe you've used the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom of an e-newsletter. All of these website features are outgrowths of a company's privacy policy.

In the U.S., federal and state laws require any business that collects customer names, email addresses, credit/debit card data and other personal information to keep that data secure and to respect its customers' privacy rights in connection with that data. Businesses that don't may be subject to legal sanctions and liabilities, including fines. By carefully creating and clearly communicating a privacy policy for your business, you can steer clear of potential legal problems and inform your customers with confidence that you'll protect their personal data.

The lay of the (legal) land

Unlike many countries, the U.S. has not enacted a single body of online privacy or data security law

for ensuring compliance is to bring an enforcement action against a company that has suffered data breaches or otherwise violated the guidelines.

If your business collects email addresses and then sends newsletters, marketing material or other advertising, you must also comply with the federal law regulating spam—the so-called CAN-SPAM Act. CAN-SPAM requires you to (1) provide customers with a procedure by which they can opt out of receiving your emails, (2) disclose clearly that marketing emails are an advertisement or solicitation and (3) provide a valid postal address of the sender. CAN-SPAM also prohibits deceptive subject headings intended to entice consumers to open your business's emails.

State law is another major source of data and privacy regulation. For example, every state has a version of the FTC (usually called a "consumer protection" agency or commission), many of which have issued privacy and data security regulations that supplement federal law. These state regulations generally apply to anyone who does business with in-state customers (including e-commerce

Resources

For tailor-made advice relating to your locality and business, consult an attorney familiar with privacy and e-data issues. Other places to learn more:

• The Federal Trade Commission website contains useful tips; start with their Privacy and Security page: ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/privacy-and-security.

• The Small Business Administration contains articles discussing privacy and security issues: sba.gov/starting-business/learn-about-business-laws/privacy-law

 \bullet The Better Business Bureau supplies information useful when drafting a privacy policy, including a helpful template to use as starting point: bbb.org/dallas/for-businesses/bbb-sample-privacy-policy1

that all businesses can consult. Instead, Congress has chosen to regulate certain industries with very specific privacy laws, while subjecting other types of businesses—including those in the craft industry—to the general oversight of the Federal Trade Commission. In addition, states and local authorities may also supplement any applicable federal laws. Let's take a look at each type of regulation that may apply to a yarn-related business.

The FTC's primary mission is to protect consumers from "unfair" or "deceptive" business practices. Although it has published various guidelines for businesses to follow in connection with privacy and data security, the FTC does not require businesses to register or file paperwork certifying that they've complied. Instead, the FTC's main tool sites based outside the state). Check your own state to see if it has regulations like these as well as any state in which your website has customers or users.

Other countries have their own set of regulations. The European Union, for instance, has very stringent privacy policies, including requiring individual customer consent to the use of website cookies. If you have customers or collect information on users in other countries, look at regulations in those countries.

In addition to regulations issued by a governing state or country, you may also have contractual obligations to make certain disclosures on your website. For example, it's common for banks who provide merchant accounts for credit-card processing to require participating businesses to disclose

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

certain types of information on their websites. You may also discover similar provisions in contracts with online e-commerce platforms or website hosting providers. Review all contracts like this and carefully note if they create an obligation on your business to make specific disclosures or adopt certain security techniques.

Safe and Secure

Exactly what form your privacy policy should take depends on many factors, but general speaking, you should:

• List all the personal information you collect from customers and users of your website: name and email address, street address, credit/debit card information, purchase history, page view history, history of click-throughs in connection with thirdparty advertising.

Describe how your business stores this information and keeps it secure. Is personal information encrypted? Who has access to the information?
Describe how your business uses personal information.

• Disclose with whom your business shares personal information.

 Tell users how they can contact your business to ask questions, opt out of emails and other solicitations, and lodge complaints.

• State whether your website uses cookies and, if so, what information is automatically logged regarding visitors to the website.

If you link to other websites, you may want to include a provision disclaiming responsibility for those other sites. You may also wish to remind customers that third-party websites that are linked to your website may have different privacy and data-security policies than yours.

The finishing step

While it's critical to draft and post a privacy policy for your website, it's just as important to ensure that you are actually complying with it. If you represent that you are the only person with access to stored data, make sure your computer is password-protected—and don't leave a sticky note on the screen displaying the password. Even the best drafted, most comprehensive policy in the world won't protect you from liability if your business does not live up to its terms.

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

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Would Shop Again

Understanding the thorny world of online reviews.

et's face it: the possibility of a negative review of your product or business (bricksand-mortar, online or both) can be a little nerve-wracking. But it turns out that a few negative reviews aren't such a bad thing. Research shows that customers are more likely to shop at a store with a 4.5-star rating than a perfect 5-star rating—a perfect rating almost always seems too good to be true and is often an indicator that a store just doesn't have many reviews in the first place. The more important factor for most customers is the content of those reviews; a mix of positive with a little bit of negative gives an overall sense of transparency (and, thus, trustworthiness) to a small business.

Amy Glosser of BYKlyn Indoor Cycling Studio—a small business with a yarn-shop-like intent to not only sell its products but to create a sense of community—says of online reviews, "As a small business, you have to be aware of and manage online reviews. I have a series of things I check every day, and Yelp is one of them."

According to Consumer Affairs, user reviews make consumers 63 percent more likely to buy from a company and can boost sales by 18 percent. So how can you get reviews to work for you and your store?

Encouraging Reviews

Online reviews are no different from good old word of mouth. People have always talked about what they like and dislike; online reviews just make that information accessible for a longer period of time to a wider variety of people. This can have a positive result: Reviews are a valuable asset and an effective way to widen your customer base. Mandy Petersen knows for a fact that online reviews send people to her store, Windy Knitty in Chicago. "People come in here all the time who say, 'I picked you because of your Yelp reviews,'" she says. "People trust their friends' opinions and other users' opinions. I think it matters."

Customers won't always think of writing reviews on their own, though. "Don't be shy about asking people to write reviews," says Amy Glosser. Think of it as planting a seed. Not all seeds grow, of course, but the ones that do reach many potential customers and spread the word about the quality of your business.

If you've had a significant interaction with a customer, it can't hurt to mention that reviews

can be helpful to the store, and you'd appreciate it if they would leave a few words about their experience on Yelp or comments on Ravelry. You can also suggest a review after checkout—when handing a customer a receipt—or add a line to the receipt saying the same.

Mandy Petersen says her store displays a sticker on the front door that reminds people about Yelp reviews. This kind of visual reminder is another way to plant a seed for customers, reminding them as they walk in or out that their support can go beyond just making a purchase. If you have a website, link to your Yelp page this shows transparency (rather than culling just the positive reviews and posting them on your own site), and can encourage people to leave a review once they're on your webpage.

BY NOA WHEELER

by showing them that there are real people running the store, people who care about each customer's experience.

It's likely that not all reviews will be completely positive, but even a bad review can be a helpful tool. Customer feedback can help mitigate similar situations in the future by giving you a heads-up about potential issues. "I talk to other people and staff about negative reviews," says Petersen. "I need to understand the situation as well as possible."

You might even find suggestions in the reviews that you'll want to implement going forward. Posten of The Novel Neighbor says, "I take things I read in the reviews seriously. If someone mentions that a particular section seems lacking, I keep that in mind as I make

Getting Started (and Getting a Sticker)

Yelp and Google both offer a suite of services and information designed for small business owners. Here are some basic tips:

• For Google, visit google.com/mybusiness. With a few clicks, you can create an account, add your business to Google maps, enter store information such as hours, and respond to reviews. It's quick, simple and free to be part of the community.

• For Yelp, head to www.biz.yelp.com. After you "claim" your business and create an account, Yelp offers varying levels of products and services to help your business. Basic tools such as responding to reviews or creating a Yelp deal are free; targeted customer ads and account management support require a fee.

• Get that sticker! Small business owners can request a "Find us on Yelp" sticker via Yelp's site. The "People Love Us on Yelp" business window cling is sent out via a semiannual program designed to award businesses for meeting a set of criteria. (Yelp doesn't make this criteria public.)

But sometimes, Petersen adds, it's more of an "organic process." Good customer service and selection leads naturally to good reviews, and just like more traditional word of mouth, word spreads.

Handling Reviews

Not all store owners like to read their reviews, but doing so keeps you informed about your customers and can help you understand people's perceptions of your business. Melissa Posten, who works at the bookstore The Novel Neighbor in St. Louis, Missouri, says, "We definitely read online reviews and consider answering them if we think it will contribute to the conversation." Answering reviews in a positive way, if you feel comfortable doing so, can reassure customers decisions about stock. I want my customers to be satisfied, so it's important to listen to what they have to say should they have a complaint."

Satisfied Customers

In the end, the first order of the day is doing good business and keeping customers happy just as it has always been. When you do this, reviews will reflect it, and cast a wide net to reach more potential customers who will love your store and appreciate your work. "You know you're doing a good job when customers feed your mission statement back to you in their reviews," says Amy Glosser of BYKlyn. "That's huge for us."

Noa Wheeler is a writer and editor living in Brooklyn.



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SMART PLANNING

Best-Laid (Emergency) **Plans**

Have an emergency plan in place to avoid potential disaster.

BY DARYL BROWER

hen forest fires started raging their way through Alberta, Canada, earlier this year, Barb Barone and Cynthia Hyslop, co-owners of River City Yarns in Edmonton, added a discussion of emergency procedures to their morning staff meetings. "We have an employee handbook that outlines what to do, but it had been a while since we reviewed it for [relevance]," Barone says. "The fires inspired us to revisit things." Barone and Hyslop haven't had to directly deal with disaster, but the fires, particularly the one in Fort McMurray that necessitated the evacuation of some 80,000 people, showed them the value of being prepared.

Mother Nature Calls

A bit farther south, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Keely Stuever Northup of Sealed with a Kiss and Margaret Ann Schroeder, owner of The Gourmet Northup, who more than once has piled customers into her car and taken them to the storm cellar in her nearby home. "We've had to close and make a run for it many times. If for any reason there isn't time for us to safely leave and go to an underground shelter, everyone knows where the safest spot in the store is and to go there." Both stores have TVs to monitor local weather stations, and Schroeder dedicates a computer to live radar. If the chance of severe weather is particularly strong, she tells employees to stay home.

"I keep a close watch on the weather, and if it is obvious that it's going to be bad, I close," she says. Keely Northup notes that Oklahoma has been experiencing stronger storms than usual over the past several years. "It's forced us to retune our tornado plans," she says. "For one, underground is now the place to be. That's why

Proper Guidelines

What should your emergency plan include? Here are a few key items recommended by the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

- Means of reporting fires and other emergencies.
- Evacuation procedures and emergency escape route assignments.
- Accounting for all employees after an emergency evacuation has been completed.
- A description of the alarm system (sirens, horn, public address system) to be used to notify employees to evacuate and/or take other actions.

• A secure location to store originals or duplicate copies of accounting records, legal documents, your employees' emergency contact lists, and other essential records. For more information, tips and online emergency planning tools, visit www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/eap.html.

Yarn Co., have plenty of experience dealing with near disaster. Northup has had close calls with fire—two blocks in the downtown area where her shop is located were nearly destroyed—and Schroeder's store bore witness to an apartment fire across the street. But the bigger issue for both stores is Mother Nature. "We're in tornado alley," explains Schroeder. "So we're dealing with the possibility of an emergency multiple times per year." Neither shop has a formal written plan in place for when a tornado looms, but their staff—like all Oklahomans—are well versed in what to do: get out, find shelter and stay safe.

"If it looks as if a tornado warning is imminent, we leave the shop and take shelter," says we leave. An inner closet used to suffice, but with F4 and F5 tornados, you don't stand much of a chance."

Small Emergencies Are Still Emergencies

Having employees who know what to do when a fire alarm sounds or a storm threatens is key, as is knowing where all the exits, fire extinguishers and shelters are located. But Megan Lostroh of Three Oaks Knits in Waterloo, Iowa, points out that store owners should also sweat the small stuff. "Little emergencies—like losing electricity or Internet access—are much more common," she says. "I have a regular credit card machine in the shop, but I keep accounts with PayPal and Square so I don't lose sales if the power is out." She also takes plentiful pictures of the store, so that if disaster does strike, she has documentation of what existed. "They're proof you had the inventory and fixtures for insurance [claims]," she says.

Oz Barron of Ball & Skein & More in Cambria, California, puts faith in sprinklers, alarm systems and the good will of his neighbors. "It's a small town," he says. "If we aren't around [when something happens], we'll still be good." But Barron points out that a lot more than inventory can be lost in a disaster-all the data stored in POS systems or computers, for example. To mitigate that scenario, he backs up all files and the store's POS system daily on an external hard drive that he keeps with him, away from the store. As an extra precaution, all information is also backed up to the cloud. "This limits our data exposure to one day," he explains. "If the hard drive in the computer fails, we can restore to another and be back up and running very quickly, and if the building burns down or experiences some other catastrophic failure, we can restore from the cloud. Our estimate is we could have our basic systems up and running again in a day."

Over at River City Yarns, Barb Barone and Cynthia Hyslop are protecting their store data in a similar fashion, with a recently installed POS system called Vend that not only backs up data to the cloud but also allows them to access the information from any location.

Back in Oklahoma City, Keely Northup has other data to worry about, and it's giving her new reason to update her emergency plans. "Oklahoma now has more seismic activity than the entire West Coast," she says. "Earthquakes are a new problem for us, and it's scary. Our best plan is to run outside, and if that's not possible, to duck under something sturdy; since there's no advance notice, it's hard to develop a better plan than that." She will, however, be sure to follow the key directives in Barone and Hyslop's emergency handbook. "Our policy has always been to stay safe," Barone says. "Don't try and be a hero—get to safety and then call the police, ambulance or whatever is needed."

Daryl Brower is a freelance writer based in New Jersey, where she's happy to be relatively safe from tornadoes, earthquakes and wildfires—at least for now.


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String Theory

"It mentioned string theory

Can selling yarn support "the good things in the world?" Shop owner Janet Avila certainly believes so, and since opening her store, String Theory, in 2004, she's been working hard to do just that.

With a stunning selection of mostly natural fibers and loads of inspiring sample garments, plus friendly, knowledgeable staffers, the Glen Ellyn, Illinois, shop supports not only Chicago-area knitters but also fair trade, small farms and the wider environment.

The circumstances surrounding Avila's transition from employee of financial giant Arthur Andersen to yarn entrepreneur go a long way toward understanding String Theory's founding principle. She was laid off from Arthur Andersen on September 10, 2001; a day later, she learned that her brother had been killed in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. "So instead of beginning a new career, I sat home and cried



and knit, " Avila says. "Suddenly I was an only child and in the spotlight. I began thinking a lot about what I stood for and what our family legacy was going to be. I had no retail experience—not even as a teenager—but knitting was my salvation, and I thought that it could be for others too. I also thought that as a store owner, I could invest in things that mattered to me."

Avila envisioned a store that would offer products that supported more than just straight commerce—women's cooperatives, companies striving to be environmentally friendly, fair trade goods, fiber artists and small farms. She named the shop String Theory, sparked by an essay by journalist Leah Eskin. "It mentioned string theory and how knitters know that everything is connected to everything else," Avila explains. "I wanted people to tap into their power to make the world a better place, either by bringing themselves peace and well-being by the simple act of knitting or by supporting yarn companies that were working on environmental or social issues. My hope has been that because of our inherent connection, whatever small thing we do at String Theory will somehow have a global impact."

It has. Browse the yarn bins at String Theory and you'll find skeins from fair-trade companies like Rewa Fibers (supporting impoverished communities in Tibet), Manos del Uruguay (which supports a women's cooperative in Uruguay) and From the Mountain (whose Afghan cashmere yarns help women find work in that war-torn country). For the planet's benefit there are eco-friendly offerings from Appalachian Cotton, Blue Sky Fibers, Woolfolk, Swans Island and more. Small businesses are represented with artisan handpaints from Feederbrook Farm, Bah Yarns, Misti Alpaca and others. Many more yarns round out the shelves, offering loads of variety in fiber, texture and color, with the common thread of ethical and sustainable credibility.

"I've seen how consumers express their values with the money they spend and how this impacts what is available," she says. "People started spending their money on organic food, and suddenly Wal-Mart had organic food on its shelves. I thought as a retailer, I could spend my money on things that I value and then find consumers who value the same things."

String Theory has stocked its shelves that way from the get-go, but Avila admits that winning customers over to the value of "all things are connected" took some time. "When I first opened, I wasn't very good at telling my story, and honestly, environmental friendliness or social responsibility was not really a thing," she says. "People just cared that our yarn selection was nice and we were nice, so they kept coming back." That changed when the shop decided to spend more time teaching customers and staff about where the yarn comes from. "I spent a lot of time educating customers about the value of natural fibers and women's cooperatives and small independent businesses," Avila explains. "I work at telling the stories behind the yarn so that my customers feel connected to our suppliers."

It works because customers, Avila says, want to be part of a community,



both locally and in the world at large. "We organize events so they can meet each other and then continue the relationship-building through social media and our weekly newsletter," she says. Classes abound and cover everything from how to use Ravelry to "summer schools" where customers learn to create socks and shawls. There are community efforts like the annual Scarf Market, where proceeds from the purchase of handmade scarves are donated to charity, plus knit-alongs and craft clubs where a limited number of customers can sign up to receive monthly project packages. Guest instructors also bring excitement to the shop and encourage customers to take a new perspective or try a new yarn. The key for both merchandise and events, says Avila, is keeping things fresh. "Customers like everything to be new," she says. "We spread out our orders so we get new yarns in every few weeks and then move them out quickly, making room and cash flow for something else."

Her careful crafting of connections from supplier to knitter has paid off. "Now some people actually come in specifically for organic yarn or they share my values and appreciate that their dollars go beyond their purchase," Avila says. "Still others just come in because they like the yarn and the people. And that's important. No matter how good the story behind the yarn is, the yarn still has to be nice to work with."

String Theory

477 N. Main Street, Glen Ellyn, IL; (630) 469-6085; www.stringtheoryyarncompany.com Years in business: 12 Square footage: 750 Staff: 5 Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 10 A.M.-5 P.M.; Thursday, 10 A.M.-9 P.M.;

Sunday 12-4 P.M., closed Monday

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Briggs & Little

A family-run Canadian mill celebrates its centennial in style.

just looked through our old records and discovered that we used to send out more than 5,000 cash-on-delivery orders in a year, and now we wouldn't send 10," says John Little, co-owner and office and sales manager of Briggs & Little Woolen Mills. The mill, active since 1857, was purchased by Little's grandfather and a partner in 1916, and it's been a family business ever since. Little's son Mike



also works at the mill, looking after production. "We're the third and fourth generations," Little says.

Little was looking through those records in advance of a day of festivities the company was planning for early June to celebrate its 100th anniversary as Briggs & Little. The community event, which drew 200-plus people from areas surrounding the New Brunswick headquarters, included historical photo displays, a trade show booth setup, and a cake-cutting ceremony. Of the memorabilia available for public viewing, Little mentions two items that garnered lots of attention on the big day. The first was an invoice dated 1909. "They sent us some wool and we made it into yarn. The client got seven and a half pounds of yarn, and their

bill came to \$1.30," Little says with a laugh. "Another one that a lot of the ladies liked was a letter from the government stating it was illegal for women to work more than 12 hours per day or more than 60 hours per week."

As Canada's oldest yarn mill, Briggs & Little has made it a priority to use only domestic fibers—materials sourced in Canada and the U.S.—in its wool knitting yarns. The bulk of its sales, 90 percent, are made in Canada, with Atlantic Canada being the company's biggest market. The remaining 10 percent is sold in the U.S., with a bit going to China and Japan.

"When [Asian tourists] visit Canada, a lot of them to the west coast, one of their souvenirs typically will be a Cowichan sweater," says Little. "It's a heavy, outdoorsy sweater, made with a 5-ply yarn, so it's really, really thick. There aren't many places in Canada that are still making this roving, but we're one of them."

Briggs & Little is located in the community of York Mills, roughly halfway between New Brunswick's capital, Fredericton, and the Maine border. The location has been advantageous for Little, in that the company has been able to quickly and adeptly respond to industry changes at home and abroad.

The company had a U.S. distributor until the 1990s. "They went out of business, so we just took over marketing duties ourselves," says Little. "We're only 20 miles from the Maine border. Once a week we would take our wholesale orders across the border and do the customs clearance so that we could ship them from a U.S. post office. We had customers in Alaska; we could take their parcels on a Wednesday and they'd have them on Saturday." Briggs & Little still delivers some orders this way today.

The 23-person company can also adjust its manufacturing schedule on the fly when sales demand it. "As far as mills go, we're very small. For the most part, it's five days a week, eight hours a day," Little explains. "But when things get really booming, we add on extra shifts."

Briggs & Little manufactures and sells a dozen types of knitting yarns—everything from roving to Regal, a 2-ply 100 percent wool. "We don't introduce as many new yarns as other Address: 3500 Route 635, Harvey, New Brunswick, Canada E6K 1J8 Employees: 23

Fun fact: Briggs & Little's mill has burned four times in 100-odd years, but the company's office building has never been touched by fire, which means paperwork—an invoice from 1909, for example—has been preserved.

companies, but the yarns we do introduce will probably always be available unless we have a problem with dye supply or the quality of the dyes," Little says. "One of the things that we pride ourselves on—and that knitting designers like—is that we very seldom discontinue a yarn or color." That continuity proves advantageous to designers, who often have to wait months or longer for design approval from those who are publishing their patterns.

Continuity is a priority when it comes to quality control, which is another reason Little is loath to officially discontinue any product. "Colors, they come back around again. If they're slow-selling, we just don't inventory as much of them. And then, 15 or 20 years down the road, they'll most likely come back around and be popular again," he says.

The company sells 100,000 to 120,000 pounds of yarn a year, and its best seller is Tuffy, a wool/nylon blend most often used in work wear—socks, mittens, vests. "In Atlantic Canada, we experience severe weather, so people tend to wear a work-type sock year round, because it wears better," Little says. It's also the same gauge as the company's 100 percent wool yarn, Heritage, and many knitters choose to incorporate both into their garments.

> The company occasionally works with designers on new concepts and pieces and sells patterns online via Patternfish. Most recently, Briggs & Little hired Canadian designer, knitting historian and *Canada Knits* author Shirley Scott ("Shirl the Purl") to create a pattern commemorating its 100th anniversary. "It's a lacy women's sweater we're calling the Millstream Tunic. It been very well received; everybody really likes it."



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State of the Industry REPORT

By Sven Risom, North Light Horizons

Today's successful local yarn shop is not just another store down the street. It is a business working to bring its brand to life. During the fall of 2015, North Light Horizons sat down with *Yarn Market News* to discuss the traits that set successful yarn stores apart from all the others. While opinions were many, it was clear that hard data was needed, and so began our research into what is working today in yarn shops across the country and what will work tomorrow.

The complete results were presented at this year's Yarn Market News Smart Business Conference, held in Atlanta. The aim of the study was to turn insights into action, complement TNNA's own market research and help yarn shop owners understand what successful stores are doing right. Seven hundred fifty yarn shop owners and industry professionals responded to the survey.

Store owners reported that approximately 80 percent of their customers are at least 35 years of age and that 41 percent of sales are for new items (items introduced in the past 12 months). While 50 percent of the responding stores have an online presence, the owners estimate that on average 80 percent of sales are made through the physical store. Stores both small and large are represented in the survey: 41 percent employ six or more people; 40 percent are sole proprietorships or employ one person. These stores also represent a broad range of experience: Five percent have been in operation for one year, 31 percent for 5 to 9 years, and 24 percent for more than 15 years.

The goal of the study was to look at the results through a specific lens: what high-performing stores report doing, in contrast with what low-performing stores report. To identify the high versus the low performers, we segmented respondents based on their self-reported growth as determined by their answer to the question: "Overall, how has your business performed this year compared to last year." [FIGURE 1]

Based on the findings, nine factors were identified as differentiators between the high and low performers. The biggest success factor is that the higher-performing stores have identified ways to increase in the three "Mores": More Shoppers, More Spending per Trip, and More Trips. In the Venn diagram below [FIGURE 2], you can see that 45 percent of the high performers had increases in all three Mores. These stores have figured out a way to increase the number of shoppers as well as the spending per visit and the number/frequency of visits. (To read a Venn diagram, visualize three circles overlapping. You can see, for example, that 11 percent of high-performing stores reported an increase only in the number of shoppers; 16 percent reported an increase in both number of shoppers and amount spent per visit, but no increase in buying frequency; and 45 percent noted an increase in all three factors.)

Driving an increase in shoppers is the most important of the Mores, but doing so does not always mean that the shoppers have to visit your bricks-and-mortar store. For example, many stores have expanded their customer outreach by attending shows or holding events, while others have increased their online performance. A few stores reported that they have great success at their local farmers' markets, and they were able to draw those buyers





to their store for additional purchases at a later date.

In stark contrast to the winners, 30 percent of the low performers reported a loss in all three categories, and 60 percent reported a decline in shoppers. Throughout the industry, we have heard many stores voice concerns about the number of shoppers, but the top three factors they reported for driving the low results were the slow economy, online competition and the weather. Reviewing all of the respondents, though, it was clear that everyone surveyed experienced the same "environmental" factors ("a mild winter," for example), but the high performers were able to adjust their business plans to reach more knitters and crocheters and gain more shoppers—that is, the high performers found a way to manage through the environmental roadblocks. Clearly, the key to success is growing the shopper base and targeting/reaching

new stitchers. So, what are the high-performing stores doing to drive their increases in all three Mores?

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES ARE BUILDING THEIR BRANDS

While running a store used to be a very local endeavor, the Internet and the abundance of shows and festivals have created a much more competitive environment. In the past, a store could do nicely by providing a good assortment of yarn and notions, advertising in local newspapers and working with local knitting/crocheting groups. Today, things are very different. High-performing stores are creating a store brand image and presence through unique marketing strategies—by carrying a large assortment of yarn from small mills and yarn producers, for instance, or by developing a line of

"store" yarns or developing custom and proprietary patterns. Knit/Purl in Portland, Oregon, Fibre Space in Alexandria, Virginia, the Yarnery in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Churchmouse Yarn & Teas on Bainbridge Island, Washington, are good examples of stores that are adding value by taking a unique approach to their businesses. Churchmouse, for example, established a clean and contemporary look for its brand from the outset, and today people who visit North Light Fibers on Block Island, Rhode Island, will often look at a store sample and know immediately that it is a Churchmouse pattern. The high performers are all thinking well beyond their four walls. They do not carry every yarn and know that they cannot address every knitter's needs. Instead, they have



The goal of the study was to look at the results through a specific lens: what high-performing stores report doing, in contrast with what lowperforming stores report. To identify the high versus the low performers, we segmented respondents based on their self-reported growth as determined by their answer to the question: "Overall, how has your business performed this year compared to last year."

identified a target shopper and are sticking with the strategy to be an indispensable resource for that shopper.

Determining the store's point of difference and then committing to that position are essential for successful brand management. Once you've determined the position, your merchandising, assortment, pricing and shelving (MAPS) should reflect it. For example, the samples in your store should communicate the designs that reflect your brand. The shelving and merchandising should represent that look, and the yarn assortment and colorways should reflect the brand character.

In many stores we've visited throughout the country, we have seen a mix of different designers, patterns, samples and finished products that have no real connection. While those stores had a

> lot of good yarn in stock, there was nothing linking them to a bigger brand or story. The goal is to get the shoppers to want to be part of your story and to feel part of the business so that the next time they are ready to buy yarn, they will come back to *your* store and not to another yarn shop. Interestingly, 41 percent of those stores with at least 25 percent of their yarns rated as "unique" were high performers, reflecting a significant correlation of unique yarns to brand identification and high performance.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES HAVE AN ONLINE PRESENCE

High-performing stores have found ways to make the Internet work for them. Whether that includes making Facebook posts, writing newsletters or maintaining blogs, the top stores are using the Internet to their advantage. In fact, some of the stores are making

significant sales through the Internet and developing their own patterns and yarns for sale online. One retailer put it best: "We consider the Internet, our [physical] store, and vending at shows and festivals to be different marketing 'channels,' each communicating and reinforcing our brand message to new and different shoppers." On the other hand, many low-performing stores wrote that they not only did not use the Internet as a sales tool but actually resented it.

While many local yarn shops sell products online, almost all high performers are also using the Internet to communicate with their shoppers. As you can see in FIGURE 3, a few stores still use print advertising, but more than 48 percent of owners are using Facebook, websites and email to talk with knitters and crocheters.



YMN's State of the Industry REPORT

You can see how the high performers are using more Internet tools and combining postings and advertising on Facebook to maximize the impact.

As shown in FIGURE 4 (page 41), 81 percent of the high performers report a positive experience with Facebook, whereas 61 percent of the low performers report a positive impact. Succeeding on Facebook takes time, resources and a dedicated effort. But once you decide to use the Internet as a marketing vehicle, it is critical to maintain that focus. A number of high-performing stores employ people who work only on the website, social media, newsletters, etc. While it can take a lot of time and resources, the Internet is critical for long-term growth and success.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES TARGET SPECIFIC SHOPPERS

The next biggest gap between high- and low-performing stores was found in their interest and ability to know their target shoppers and to design programs specifically for them. In fact, about 40 percent of the respondents stated that they carry "a broad range of yarns to satisfy all shoppers and knitters" rather than "a line of yarns that is well tailored to my target customer." While many shop owners feel a need to address every shopper, the high performers know who their customers are and aim to provide yarns for those shoppers.

This strategy requires store owners to make choices about whom they are talking to—not an easy task, but the survey results strongly indicate that a single yarn shop cannot be all things to all people. If your store is located in the vicinity of a discount shop, for instance, carry only a small assortment of similar yarns, since most yarn shops cannot compete at a heavily discounted pricing level. One clear topic that did come through the research is that all communities are home to people who are willing to spend money on and appreciate the benefits of quality yarn. As you plan your target-marketing program, map out your vision for the yarn store, analyze the competitive environment and know the local geography.

Interestingly, the high-performing stores also differentiate in their attitudes toward their shoppers. To measure the attitudes, we created a "word cloud" of the respondents' answers that mapped how many times they used certain words while describing their shoppers and customer attitudes. Based on this analysis, it becomes quite evident how different the customers are in high- versus lowperforming stores. [FIGURE 5]

Both groups highlight income as an important characteristic but that's where the similarities end. High-performing stores describe their shoppers with positive words such as "love," "projects," "quality," "natural"—all describing the interests and attitudes of their target shoppers—with great frequency. Interestingly, the highperforming stores rarely used the words "knitting" or "yarn." In contrast, the lower-performing store owners most frequently describe their shoppers with such words as "retired," "knitter," "yarns," "disposable," "old" and "time"—all describing customers who may not be invested in their hobbies or as focused on quality. While subtle, this distinction is very important. Each store must assess its environment and decide whom it wants to have as a customer. A key difference between high- and low-performing stores is that the high performers have found a way to build a "good" target shopper base that is willing to spend and engage in that store.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES EXCITE AND ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

High-performing stores do not think of their interactions with shoppers as transactional (buy-sell); instead they strive to build the relationships by engaging and involving customers in their bricksand-mortar and/or their online stores. Many high-performing stores say that the goal of offering classes is to build customer loyalty or sales. But these stores are also working to engage their customers with merchandising events and special programs such as knit-ins, crochet-alongs, trunk shows and more. One store started creating a special fall event at a large farm in town, away from the store. It is one more way to connect with shoppers and increase the number of "touch points." Forty-four percent of stores that held events said their customer base grew; only 23 percent of those that did not hold events reported a growth in the number of customers.

In-store events are key opportunities to draw shoppers into the store and keep them coming back for more. Experiential events were seen as the most engaging, so try to get customers involved through hands-on activities or new techniques. This is different from a traditional class setting and requires more of a personal touch. While experiential events are important for all yarn shops, they will have the most impact for those who do not have an online presence.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES TREAT THE BUSINESS LIKE A BUSINESS

One of the biggest gaps between the high- and low-performing stores relates to the business aspects of running an LYS. Most of the lower-performing stores do not enjoy handling the finances and bookkeeping and do not like the "back room" work of running a business. While approximately 80 percent of the stores stated that they have a very strong understanding of knitting and crochet, only 40 percent felt they have a very strong understanding of merchandising and measuring performance (profit, revenue, inventory, etc.). As you can see in FIGURE 6, more than 90 percent stated that they "very much" enjoy knitting and working with yarns, while only 30 percent enjoy creating and planning events and only 15 percent stated that





they "very much" enjoy working on financials or inventory.

Clearly, running a successful store means being able to manage finances, merchandising and inventory. If you do not like or enjoy them, you need to take on a partner or hire someone who can handle the basics of the business. In our interviews with shop owners, a lack of financial acumen was one of the major issues specifically found in lower-performing stores. These owners do not enjoy the "business" aspects, and so they do not track performance closely. Many stores also do not think about or track how many yarns they have for different shopper segments. For example, some stores have 20 or more hand-dyed yarns on their shelves, even though hand-dyeing is not a key part of their brand character. While very few stores are able to afford highly accurate data systems, every store should be reviewing and analyzing its business based on key performance measures.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES DIVERSIFY THEIR OFFERINGS

Another important characteristic of high-performing stores is that they have diversified into different fiber/craft areas, as can be seen in FIGURE 7. While these lines may not work for everyone, it is important to include other fiber/textile/craft lines to help build the total revenue and reduce business fluctuations. Look for a complementary product line that will work well in your store and keep your shoppers interested.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES FOCUS ON NEW MERCHANDISING

Another differentiator between high- and low-performing retailers is rotating store displays and bringing in new yarns. Those stores that rotate displays and "change things up" at least every three weeks are almost two times more likely to be high-performing stores than those stores that rotate displays every month or less. In addition, stores with 30 percent or more of their sales coming from new items (purchased within the last 12 months) are significantly more likely to be high performers than those stores with only 20 percent of sales or less coming from new items. In essence, staying with the old and not changing up the stock is a sure-fire recipe for being a lower-performing store.

Yarn stores are not like grocery stores: When grocery stores change the location of an item, upgrade to new shelving or rearrange the store, shoppers get very upset. Not so in a yarn store, where changing displays adds excitement and sparks interactions between the staff and customers. People want to see new yarns, new designs, get new ideas and to be "refreshed." I recently met with a yarn shop owner who commented that her store "has looked this way for years and people just love it—why change what is work-



ing? We bring in a few new colors and yarns, but we don't want to change things up too much." But moments later, we were assessing why business was down and why the store had few new shoppers.

HIGH-PERFORMING STORES ARE ALWAYS PLANNING AND THINKING

One of the clear characteristics separating high- and low-performing stores is that low-performing stores have trouble taking and making time to plan the business, think of new ideas or come up with new merchandising or pattern support, especially if a store is short-staffed. Availability of resources, therefore, is a key factor of success, and the high-performing stores find ways to spend time planning and thinking. As I was reviewing the research results, I asked a wellknown knitwear designer what she thought was the number one impediment to success for most yarn stores. Her answer was simple: "Resources. Doing all of this work is exhausting and takes a lot of time. It is a lot of work."

NOW WHAT?

The most important lesson from all the research is that it is critical to take time from your day or week or month to plan the business. Once you block off some time, we suggest you follow the recipe of high-performing stores:

- Make plans to push the three Mores
- Treat your business as a brand—understand and highlight what makes you different
- Make the online marketplace work for you
- Excite and engage your knitters
- Manage your LYS as a business
- Determine and focus on your target shopper
- Diversify your offerings
- Refresh and keep things feeling new
- Take time to plan and execute

We have identified a number of opportunities to improve store performance, and we suggest that you evaluate your LYS against these key factors. Maybe grade the store's performance on each and identify those that offer the most opportunity for improvement. Do not get overwhelmed! None of these is a quick fix. We also think it is important that you not slip back once you improve performance in a particular area. For example, improving your Facebook and online communications requires ongoing work and diligence. It is not easy, but it is important that you consistently communicate with your customers in a way that fits your brand image and style.

Sven Risom, Laura Risom and Karyn Logan run North Light Fibers, a micro yarn mill producing handcrafted, minimally processed yarns made on Block Island, Rhode Island. North Light Fibers sells yarns wholesale and also has a small yarn store on the island.

North Light Horizons works with stores directly to identify opportunities to improve merchandising, assortment, pricing, promotion and shelving programs. Sven Risom's background in retail consulting and market research means he is always looking for ways to apply findings that will enhance the performance of local yarn shops.

Source: © Yarn Market News/North Light Horizons 2016

THE MASTERS



Jim Bryson, the gregarious owner of Bryson Distributing, is always ready for a freewheeling conversation about everything under the sun (fine liquors, especially). YMN's Erin Slonaker decided it was time to turn the focus on the man himself: business owner, champion of the knitting industry, intrepid knitter.

YMN: When did you start your company, and what was it about the time that made it a good choice? For that matter, why the knitting industry?

JB: In 1981, I was a builder. But mortgage rates had spiked to 18 percent, and you couldn't give a house away. I had always been good with people, and sales seemed like a good interim job. I began as an independent sales rep for seven small yarn companies. After three months, I was breaking even, so I decided to give it three more. It didn't take me long to discover that sales is more about relationships than products, but you still have to have good products. As I spent more time on the road, my relationships became stronger. My journey through the yarn industry wasn't deliberate or planned. I tend to stumble from one thing to the next. But remember, if you stumble with grace, people will think you're dancing. Just have faith that you are doing the right thing.

HE'S GOT THE NOTIONS

YMN: Which came first, your wife's yarn store or the distribution company? Do you knit?

JB: My wife, Mona, had purchased a small weaving store and started adding knit"REMEMBER, IF YOU STUMBLE WITH GRACE, PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU'RE DANCING.

ting yarns and supplies, because her grandmother had taught her to knit as a young child. Since I wasn't doing anything productive, I started helping her out in the shop. She told me I had to learn to knit to work there. I figured if I could build a house, I could certainly knit a sweater. I took a knitting class—not taught by her—and learned to knit using the continental method. Because I could add, subtract, multiply, divide and use a tape measure, I was able to design my first sweater, a Fair Isle knit, and it fit. Of course I did knit a swatch before starting.

YMN: What's it like being married to someone who also works in the industry?

JB: My wife's store, Soft Horizons in Eugene, Oregon, led me into this business, gave me insight into the workings of retail, and over the years has continued to show me the trials and tribulations of small retail. It has also shown me on a continuing basis the creativity and joy that the retail shops of America bring to their communities.

YMN: How does your previous work inform your work now?

JB: In all endeavors, you have to learn to get along with people, how to listen and find the common ground. Regardless of the industry you are in, when you're working with vendors or customers, you follow the same rules.

YMN: How do you select your products?

JB: Many of our products have been suggested by customers and shop owners. Some we create because of a need or as an improvement to an existing item. Some are just for fun. Our customers remain our biggest source of inspiration.

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

JB: When I started, in 1981, the industry was dominated by four or five large companies. Yarn shop shelves were filled with acrylic worsted, acrylic baby yarns, a few acrylic poly-nylon novelties and a little wool. The acrylics of that era were not nearly as enduring as the best on the market today. All of today's most successful companies

were in their infancy or did not exist. An era of exciting yarns from small companies was about to begin.

YMN: How do you maintain your passion for the industry?

JB: The yarn industry gave me the opportunity to design yarns and color palettes. It allowed me to meet and make friends with creative and talented people. The shop owners I meet are incredibly dedicated to the craft. They struggle mightily to serve the knitting community around the country. They make it easy for me to support them and the industry in any way I can. Somehow this business allows me to have fun as I work.

YMN: What do you think is the most important change businesses—and stores—should consider making to be successful? Where is the industry heading?

JB: Stores have to continually look to engage tomorrow's customer. There has been an amazing shift in the way we reach people. As difficult as it is for many of us to accept, the old ways of doing business are becoming less and less viable. Yellow Pages advertising used to be the gold standard for reaching customers. Today, electronic media is the dynamic gateway to new customers. Social media goes where the young customer lives. Even technophobes cannot escape its reach. To repeat, stores need to find a way to engage the young customer. We have to find ways to educate and build an appreciation for the knitting community found in the bricks and mortar.

YMN: You're very business-minded. Do you have any recommendations for resources or books that those in the industry should look into or read?

JB: Each shop in the country should find a cause that addresses the concerns of those most in need, primarily our children. Not only will it help their communities; the recognition they receive from the local media can only build good will. As far as books go, good ethics will equal or trump many books on business. *The One Thing* by Gary Keller is an excellent read.

YMN: What are your hobbies when you're not working?

JB: Building and woodworking—taking wood with bark on it and turning it into something else—keep me entertained most days.



Sunflower Koigu Magazine 8 Fall 2016

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