



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

THE COST OF FREE

How to deal with never-ending requests for free goods and services.

SPIN CYCLE

Is it time to add spinning supplies to your product mix?

WHAT'S APP-ENING?

How Millennials are changing the way retailers do business.

JANUARY 2017



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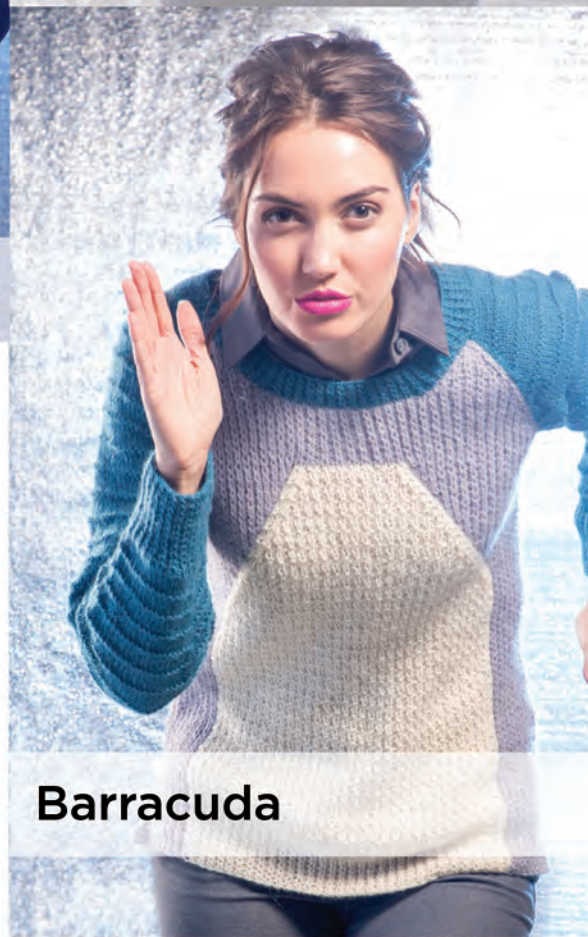
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Stronger Together



on the cover

The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn

Ralph Waldo Emerson's quote gives me hope—remember that it sometimes takes only one thing to create an abundance.

Wrapping our acorns is Cascade Yarns' Alpaca Lace, a 100% baby alpaca yarn that comes in 28 beautiful colors.

Photograph by Marcus Tullis

CLARIFICATION

Our yarn page in the October 2016 issue listed only the number of solid colors of Cascade 220. In fact, there are 191 current colors in both solids and heathers. We apologize for the omission.

A friend of mine recently opened a bookstore. She's encountered a problem that I know many of you have dealt with too: showrooming. You know the action even if you haven't heard the term before: It's when people come into your shop, take careful note (sometimes even photographs) of the items they are interested in, then leave without purchasing a single thing—and you feel quite certain they're going to buy said items online. In fact, my friend has even found people taking pictures of a book's ISBN number to better search for the title outside her shop.

She's frustrated by this practice. She's created a beautiful, carefully decorated space for book lovers, but they're not rewarding her efforts. In response, she put up a simply but strikingly designed sign that reads: "Find it here. Buy it here. Keep us here." I sure hope her message gets through to those who browse her store.

This message is one we need to get out to all yarn customers. Yarn shops provide more than just the raw materials of a project—they support needlecrafts in countless ways, with classes, help, inspiration and more. And who better to aim your message at than the next generation of knitters, crocheters, weavers and spinners? Millennials are a powerful demographic, and appealing to them will help ensure the longevity of our passions. Nora Abousteit shares advice on how to speak to this generation on page 46.

While we're reminding customers to shop at small businesses, we must also remind them, and others in our industry, that we can't sustain our businesses if we give too much away for free. It's an issue that I've heard about from all facets of the industry, including yarn companies, yarn stores, designers and publishers. This issue affects everyone, the same way showrooming does. Leslie Petrovski explores the subject on page 42.

Later this month, the U.S. will inaugurate a new president. I don't know what the future holds, but I hope that small businesses will be able to survive and thrive. We have to work together to keep our industry alive.

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



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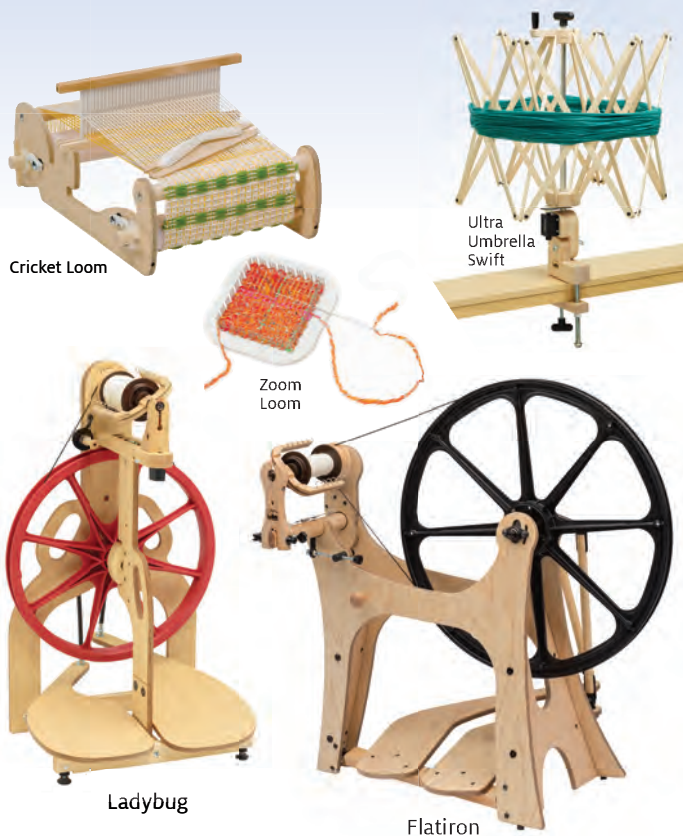
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MORE SOFTWARE FOR YOUR KNITWEAR



▼ The **LoveKnitting App** is the latest application to promise a high-tech solution to low-tech problems like row counting and tracking progress in a chart. Launched by online retailer/social media platform LoveKnitting.com, the free app is a digital pattern reader that integrates with the LoveKnitting.com pattern library. From the app you can view all of your previously purchased or downloaded LoveKnitting patterns along with a range of patterns currently offered gratis to those who download the application (more free

designs will be added monthly). Once you've pulled up a pattern—say, the free Pax the Alpaca toy by Amanda Berry—you can use handy tools like the row counter and place marker, enlarge charts and text while also amending the pattern with your own personal notes and sketches. You can even add progress photos.

The LoveKnitting app is currently available for iPad only, but iPhone and Android versions are due out by the end of January. The application launched last August; user response to the cute, cartoon-like interface has been enthusiastic. "Users love the convenience of being able to access their entire LoveKnitting pattern library from one place," says Sarah Bush of LoveKnitting.com. "They also like the custom tools we've built into the app, with the row counter and place marker proving especially popular." www.loveknitting.com/app

HOT BUTTONS

▼ Need buttons? Skacel Collection, Inc. added buttons to its menu of fiber-arts-related products last summer when it acquired Renaissance/Blue Moon Buttons. The button line, which will carry the name **Skacel Buttons: Renaissance/Blue Moon**, will debut this month at the TNNA Winter Trade Show.

"We've discontinued some buttons and are bringing in all kinds of new buttons from Italy, France, Germany, the Philippines, India and Panama," says Chuck Wilmesher, Skacel's director of new product development. "We've been ordering buttons from all over the world." More than 1,275 styles of buttons are currently available. Skacel will also have plenty of made-in-the-USA fasteners along with about two dozen Skacel-designed, American-made buttons. Price points will hover in the middle and upper ranges. "We don't want to compete with buttons that you can find at big box stores," he says.

Buying decisions have been guided by a wholesale customer survey, which generated responses from 350 shops. Overwhelmingly, Wilmesher notes, shops want "interesting, unique buttons." Skacel Buttons will be packaged in tubes to mimic the way they are displayed in most yarn and sewing shops. Look for a wide selection at the Skacel Collection booth. www.skacelknitting.com

HAPPY LYS DAY!

▼ There's a day for record stores and independent bookstores, so why not yarn shops? TNNA's Yarn Group is in the planning stages of a new industry-wide event that will allow yarn makers and retailers to show appreciation and support for local yarn shops. **LYS Day** will celebrate the unique and vibrant communities that local yarn shops foster. "TNNA and Yarn Group want to show the world that we are committed to small, independent yarn shops," says Courtney Kelley, chairperson of Yarn Group and co-owner of Kelbourne Woolens. "We hope that this day—based on the popular Record Store Day and Local Comic Shop Day—becomes a day of celebration of our creative community. We want to make LYS Day the biggest sales day of the year for our shops." Curious? Join Yarn Group at its member meeting on January 22, at the TNNA Winter Trade Show in San Jose, California. Learn more at www.yargroup.org.



STRETCHING STRING

▼ Last fall, Manhattan yarn shop **String** extended the reach of its brand by offering String-branded yarns wholesale to 13 yarn shops across the U.S. under the concept String@Collective Shops. "This is the first time String yarns have been available outside our New York flagship," says owner Stacy Charles. "These are a select group of the finest stores, geographically dispersed. These yarns are not being sold anywhere except through the Collective retailers."

The String@ launch was supported by a collection of patterns for fall/winter 2016 called the Cosmopolitan Collection. Designed by Lidia Karabinech, Annabelle Speer, Irina Poludnenko, Teresa Chorzepa and Dina Mor, the patterns showcase a range of luxury knits including matching mitts and scarves, sweaters, vests, hat-and-scarf sets and other knits.

String Yarns are spun in Italy from Mongolian cashmere and other fibers. Charles says that String's cashmere yarn line has been expanded to feature additional colors, weights and blends. The spring line will highlight a spring cashmere color palette, new cashmere blends and silks. For additional information, visit www.stringyarns.com.

LLAMA DRAMA



▼ In February during New York Fashion Week, a whole lotta llama will be walking the catwalk. Showcasing 15 looks for men and women, including a number of garments knitted from **Long Island Livestock Company** (LILCO) llama-blend and alpaca yarns, the Chapman McIntyre collection by James Chapman and Jacob McIntyre was sourced and constructed mainly in the state of New York. “It’s amazing to be able to go to a farm and see the animals and make sure everything is up to the standards we want,” Chapman says.

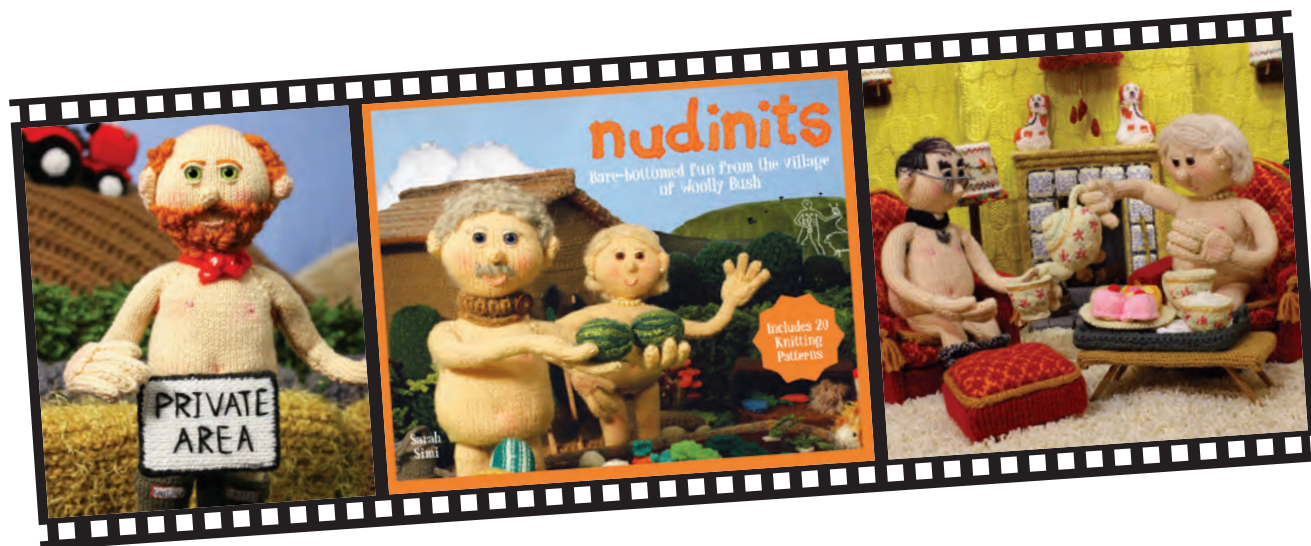
Chapman, who is finishing his senior year at Parsons, discovered LILCO while working on a sustainable, zero-waste project for school. A knitter himself, he visited Tabbethia Haubold-Magee’s farm in Yaphank, New York, for research purposes and fell for the yarn and animals, eventually creating a cropped, sleeveless turtleneck from a sport-weight 75% llama/25% merino blend he dyed with madder root. “I believe there is

no other option,” he says about his decision to source locally. “Sustainable practices should be a standard for every design company. Fashion needs to be responsible. That’s the bottom line. That’s it.”

The collection that he and his partner will send down the runway will feature LILCO yarns milled specially for Chapman McIntyre. LILCO will also be sponsoring Chapman’s senior thesis show at Parsons in April, which will again highlight garments grown, sewn, crocheted and knitted in the Empire State.

Expect the Fashion Week Chapman McIntyre show to be both environmentally conscious and au courant. “Many designers think sustainable fashion is ugly or boring, but working locally with a farm gives you more opportunity to design fully and without limitations. The collection is going to be very modern looking,” he says. “When you see it, you won’t say, ‘It must have come from a farm.’”

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT



▼ Though it premiered two years ago, *Nudinitis—Tickled Pink*, the world’s first all-knitted, stop-motion animated film, continues to draw audiences at screenings worldwide—and now U.S. knitters can make their own Nudinitis characters when the pattern book, *Nudinitis: Bare-Bottomed Fun From the Village of Woolly Bush*, is published in the United States in April.

Kind of a Benny Hill meets *Knit Your Own Kama Sutra*, *Tickled Pink* tells the story of the nudist denizens of Woolly Bush, a typical English country village. Starring Barbara and Bernard—wearing not a stitch—the film opens on Barbara’s birthday, which Bernard has apparently forgotten. Hilarity and double entendres ensue.

Written by Sarah Simi and animated by Ed Hartwell, who formed the production team Wooly Vision, the 22-minute film took two years

to make. Simi, a lifelong knitter who grew up watching stop-motion animation, came up with the idea of making an animated film using knitting. When she heard about free hiking, a British fad involving nude hiking, “the villagers lost their clothes,” she jokes.

With sets, puppets and landscaping completely hand knit, the film, which was developed as a prospective pilot for a series, has been shown at film festivals worldwide and won the award for best comedy at the 2015 Portobello Film Festival. Last fall, Simi showed the film at The Knitting and Stitching Show in London to enthusiastic audiences.

“There was huge interest in it,” she says. “Knitters can’t get over the detail and how we made everything and never had a pattern.”

The film has spawned a line of Nudinitis greetings cards and a calendar—“12 months of

pleasure guaranteed.” The pattern book, which debuted in the U.K. last November and has been popular in British yarn shops, features 20 patterns that include Barbara, Bernard, the cat Fufu, a knitted tea set, and Barbara’s rudely shaped topiary bushes. It was written by Simi, with patterns by Caroline Bletsis. (The two also knit the entire film: Simi the puppets and scenery and Bletsis the props and animals.)

“I thought it would be a bit niche,” Simi says of *Nudinitis*, “but it appeals to a broader range of people than I thought. Some appreciate the sheer skill of the knitting and animation and some love the silliness and innuendo and double entendre.

“The funny thing is, we thought nudists would hate us, but we’ve got this huge nudist following. They love us.” To watch *Tickled Pink*, visit www.nudinitis.com.



TO STITCH

So much yarn, so little time. On these pages is a smattering of new yarns that have recently come to our attention.

U.K. CALLING

American craftpreneur **Vickie Howell** has taken her show on the road with an eponymous yarn line for U.K.-based retailer Deramores, launching with two yarns—Vickie Howell Mod Wool (a 100% superwash merino roving yarn

available in eight colors) and Vickie Howell Woolpaca Chunky (an 80% merino/20% baby alpaca chainette that also comes in eight colors). Deramores, which describes itself as the “U.K.’s leading online, award-winning knitting and crochet retailer,” released the collection last October along with seven patterns. New designs will be added twice a month throughout the fall and winter seasons.

Howell, the former host of the DIY Network’s *Knitty Gritty* and author of more than a dozen knitting and crochet books, says the inspiration for Mod Wool came from her love for mid-century modern design. “The 1960s featured a very distinct palette of pop colors—turquoise, avocado green, coral, baby pink,” Howell writes in an email. “The softness, washability and mod-meets-happy palette lends itself well to everything from blankets and hats to cardigans and baby sweaters.”

Woolpaca Chunky, with its chain construction, “feels modern and has a lovely loftiness to it when knitted,” she says. “It takes color really well, so I wanted the color palette to reflect the deep, rich tones and classic neutrals that are on-trend for Autumn/Winter 2016/17—indigo blue, ochre, rusty red, magenta.” She likes this yarn for wraps, cowls, scarves and “flowy cardigans for the cooler weather.”

Howell notes that England is experiencing something of a fiber renaissance, and as a Yankee craft entrepreneur, that means opportunity. “Over the past year or so I’ve noticed an increased excitement over knitting and crochet in the U.K.,” she says. “From veteran designers having lines in major department stores to newer fashion companies getting into the stitching game to gorgeous indie mags and genre blogs being published out of England, Ireland, Scotland and beyond, there’s a fiber fever over there—and I want to be part of it.” us.deramores.com



NEVER ENOUGH SHETLAND

Jamieson & Smith, the venerable purveyor of Shetland wool and yarn, has released a tempting collection of six undyed colors under the name Shetland Heritage Naturals (100% Shetland wool; 120yds/25g). A reproduction of yarns found in Fair Isle garments housed in the Shetland Museum and Archives, Shetland Heritage yarns are worsted-spun and slightly

finer than most contemporary yarns used for stranded colorwork. The 7.5-stitches-to-the-inch gauge over Fair Isle patterning allows for more intricate patterns typical of 19th-century stitchers. The collection of naturals joins 12 dyed colors of Shetland Heritage yarns.

www.shetlandwoolbrokers.co.uk



BROOKLYN TWEED WORSTED-SPUN

For those who like a tidy, smooth yarn, check out **Brooklyn Tweed**’s new worsted-spun DK-weight, Arbor. Spun at Jagger Brothers in Maine from Montana and South Dakota-grown Targhee wool, fibers are combed before being spun to create a more lustrous, durable yarn. The company’s other workhorse yarns, which include Shelter and Loft, are woolen-spun, a preparation that yields light, warm yarns with a more rustic look and feel. Arbor comes in 30 colors and is dyed at Maine’s Saco River Dyehouse. It was released last October in tandem with nine patterns, all by Brooklyn Tweed founder Jared Flood, that include hats, shawls, wraps and

cowls. Arbor, Flood says, “is doing very well for us right out of the gate. We’ve been really excited to develop a new yarn that offers a nice counterpoint to our signature woolen-spun heathers, which are the only yarns we produced for the first few years. The addition of Arbor has opened up a lot of possibilities as well in terms of the types of fabrics we can create in our design work. I think a large color palette is so important for a good workhorse yarn like this, and I think that has helped garner interest as well. It’s certainly hard to choose just one.” The yarn can be found online and at BT stockists. www.brooklyntweed.com



MOM AND SON YARN

Famous for her whimsical kids' knits and toys, **Susan B. Anderson** has just taken the natural leap from pattern designer to yarn designer. In partnership with her son Evan Anderson, the two have launched **Barrett Wool Co.**, a 100-percent American yarn business. "I work for a lot of companies and have designed for yarn companies for many years now, and I thought, Why not?" she says. "I love everything about it. I love figuring out the colors and the twist."

Three years in the making, the initial Barrett Wool Co. launch (the "B" in Susan B. Anderson stands for Barrett) features two yarns in a collection called "Home"—a 3-ply worsted weight and 4-ply fingering weight. The yarns are semi-

worsted-spun from American Columbia wool and come in 16 colors each. Initial patterns include an argyle toy lamb, hats and wraps. In addition to sourcing and manufacturing the yarn in the United States, Barrett Wool Co. will also be releasing free video tutorials to support knitters working on BWC projects.

Currently the yarn can be purchased from the Barrett Wool Co. website only, but the mother-and-son team want to wholesale the yarns as they ramp up. "We want to keep expanding to more colors, more weights and add more fiber blends," she says. "We're having the best time and hoping for the same wonderful response we've had so far." www.barrettwoolco.com



KYRGYZ CASHMERE

Last fall, **June Cashmere**, which sources fiber from nomadic shepherds in Kyrgyzstan, released eight new colors in its line of DK- and lace-weight cashmeres. Now available in one natural and 11 dyed hues, the yarn represents years of working with Kyrgyz goat herders to improve the quality of their fiber—and the amount they can command for it.

Founded by Sy Belohlavek, who worked closely with Kyrgyz farmers and provided them with incentives to better their fiber, June Cashmere is washed in Belgium, spun in the U.K. and dyed at Saco River Dyehouse in Maine. The company has also invested in the communities from which it buys cashmere fiber and has purchased and

repaired heating systems for local schools.

How does Kyrgyz cashmere compare? Overall, it is quite varied because the Soviets brought in different goat breeds, Belohlavek explains. "But the two regions where we work were more remote and less affected by those Soviet breeding programs, allowing the genetics of the original indigenous goat breed to remain more preserved. It is this local breed that has the capacity to produce true high-quality cashmere."

A limited amount of yarn is available wholesale to shops. "We're working with Stacy Charles for some limited wholesale distribution," Belohlavek explains, "as well as setting up accounts directly." www.junecashmere.com



STORYBOOK YARN

Remember Sweet Pea, the real-life lamb whose story landed children's picture book *The Sheepover* on the *New York Times* bestseller list? She and her friends have contributed their fleeces to a new yarn called **Sweet Pea and Friends Friendship Blend**.

Spun and dyed by Battenkill Fibers in Greenwich, New York, the all-American worsted-weight yarn was made from fiber sourced from *The Sheepover* authors John and Jennifer Churchman's Dorset-Montadale flock. It debuted last fall at the Southern Adirondack Fiber Festival and the New York Sheep and Wool Festival at Rhinebeck.

Currently, the yarn comes in 10 colors and is supported by patterns that echo garments and accessories featured in the book. There's also a new picture book out called *Brave Little Finn*, about Sweet Pea's fearful baby brother.

"What makes this yarn really special," John Churchman says, "is that Mary Jeanne [Packer, of Battenkill Fibers] took Sweet Pea and Finn's fleeces and processed them separately and blended them into all the wool. So there's a little Sweet Pea and Finn in every skein you get." The yarn is available wholesale and retail. For information, contact the mill or www.sweetpeafriends.com.



STONE WOOL

Twig & Horn, the needlearts accessories company and Quince & Co. spinoff, just released its first yarn. A collaboration between handspinner Whitney Hayward and Twig & Horn, Stone Wool is a 100% American Cormo wool 2-ply yarn spun at Mountain Meadow Wool in Buffalo, Wyoming, and dyed in Maine. It debuted late last fall.

Cormo wool—the breed represents a comingling of

Corriedale and Merino sheep; hence the portmanteau "Cormo"—is known for its bouncy softness. In this case the yarn was spun in a combination worsted/woolen process, resulting in a worsted-weight yarn with a pebbly texture. The yarn debuted with four patterns—a hat, mittens, cowl and pullover—and is available in 16 colors on the Twig & Horn website and at select stockists worldwide. www.twigandhorn.com

READ ALL ABOUT IT

If you think print is a moribund medium, think again. Consider these new magazine debuts.



KOEL MAGAZINE

You know all those woven wall hangings you've been admiring on Pinterest? There's now a magazine for that. Launched in October, *Koel Magazine* (pronounced "cool") covers the intersection between yarn crafting and home décor. Published by Singapore-based design and digital marketing shop Studio Bloesem, the quarterly magazine features contemporary interior design projects in fiber arts such as knitting, crochet, macramé, latch hooking, weaving and embroidery, as well as interviews with artists and yarn crafters from around the world. On the website, readers can purchase project kits, spe-

cially curated yarns and yarn bundles, bags and home accessories while also gleaning additional inspiration from the magazine's free online content. According to *Koel's* mission statement, the magazine is "impeccably curated through captivating photography, revealing beautifully styled spaces. Homes become personal museums filled with handmade yarn designs." Find it online and at yarn shops and other boutiques around the world. www.koel-magazine.com



MAKING

Recognizing that many knitters are "multicraftual," Carrie Bostick Hoge decided to take the skills she had developed as an independent designer of Madder knitting patterns and extend them to a full magazine that not only offers knitting projects but also crochet, sewing, embroidery, cooking, photo tutorials and stories about makers.

Each issue of *Making* focuses on a theme. Published last May, the premiere edition, called "Flora," showcased a dogwood-inspired counted-cross-stitch sampler, needle-felted carrots and radishes, a block-printed

tote, coloring sheets, an adorable fabric doll, crocheted posy chains and a slate of botanical knits.

The magazine quickly found an audience and sold out. Hoge upped the print run for the second edition, "Fauna," which came out in November. "I'm pleasantly surprised and excited and encouraged by the support," she says. "People are hungry to see all these crafts in one publication." Printed in Hoge's home state of Maine, the magazine is available online and at 130 mostly bricks-and-mortar stockists; the magazine's online "Making Market" sells kits, accessories and Madder books.

"People have been very positive that it is [available as a hard copy]," Hoge says about launching a print magazine in an increasingly electronic universe. "They can hold it and look through it and keep it on their shelves. In a world that is so digital, it's nice to have something so tangible." www.makingzine.com



LAINÉ MAGAZINE

If you don't know your *kaalikääryleet* from your *finnsheep*, you may want to crack the binding of *Laine*. This niche periodical, which debuted in December, is a Nordic knitting and lifestyle magazine from Finland. Co-founded by three knitting friends—former yarn shop owner, journalist and photographer Jonna Hietala; food blogger and photographer Sini Ellen; and graphic artist and illustrator Elina Johanna—the biannual magazine offers about 10 knitting patterns per issue along with what Ellen describes as "insightful, long-format stories from the world of wool, interviews, exciting travel articles, seasonal

recipes and strong, visual storytelling." Ellen defines Nordic life as "living according to the seasons and in connection with nature. In knitting, it means natural fibers, good wool and slow, mindful living."

Besides the magazine, the triumvirate hope to organize knitting retreats and gatherings around the world. "To inspire and get inspired, to get together and to create and share meaningful moments—that's what it's all about," Ellen says. "We hope that *Laine* will be not just a magazine but an entire community." The magazine is available on the *Laine* website and at stockists worldwide. www.lainemagazine.com

INTERWEAVE INTEGRATES UNDER ONE URL

There's a new **Interweave** on the Internet. Last November, Interweave's websites—all 19 of them—aggregated under the umbrella of **Interweave.com**. The move is an effort on the company's part to reinvigorate the brand and return to its roots, explains Interweave general manager John Bolton. In a letter to readers on the new website, he writes, "Interweave has been built on a strong foundation that is committed to the long-term best interest of the communities we serve."

In addition to bringing websites such as Knitting Daily, Crochet Me and Weaving Today into the fold, the Patternworks and Keepsake Needle-Arts catalogs are available now at Interweave.com. This makes it possible for visitors interested in fiber arts to not only view and purchase content such as books, DVDs and magazines, but also to order knitting, crochet and needlework supplies. "Patternworks customers now have access to all this fantastic content," Bolton says. "Plus all the same products are now on Interweave.com."

Interweave.com, too, is leveraging its content expertise by adding 18 new pieces of content daily across its subject matter areas of knitting, crochet, spinning, weaving, beading, jewelry and needlework. "We want to develop our audience," he says. "We want to be that digital resource for knitters, crocheters, beaders, weavers and spinners, so they come to see what Interweave has done this morning." www.interweave.com

January 13–15
Vogue Knitting LIVE!
New York Marriott Marquis
New York, New York
vogueknittinglive.com

January 21–23
TNNA Winter Trade Show
San Jose Convention Center
San Jose, California
tnna.org

January 26–28
Oxford Fiber Arts Festival
Oxford, Mississippi
oxfordarts.com

February 16–19
Madrona Fiber Arts Winter Retreat
Hotel Murano
Tacoma, Washington
madronafiberarts.com

February 23–26
Stitches West
Santa Clara Convention Center
Santa Clara, California
knittinguniverse.com/west

February 24–26
New England Textile Arts Network's SPA Knit & Spin
Hilton Garden Inn
Freeport, Maine
netafiberforum.blogspot.com

February 24–26
Sheep in the City Getaway
Comfort Suites Milwaukee Airport
Oak Creek, Wisconsin
sheepinthecitygetaway.com

February 24–March 12
Roving Indiana Yarn Crawl
Various locations
Rovingindiana.com

February 25–28
Tampa Bay Yarn Crawl
Tampa Bay, FL
facebook.com/events/682631371985014

March 2–5
Rose City Yarn Crawl
Portland, Oregon
rosecityyarncrawl.com

March 10–11
Jay County Fiber Arts Festival
Jay Community Center
Portland, Indiana
visitjaycounty.com

March 10–11
Edinburgh Yarn Festival
Edinburgh Corn Exchange
Edinburgh, Scotland
edinyarnfest.com

March 16–19
Knit North Yarn Crawl
Boston, Massachusetts
knitnorthyarncrawl.com

March 17–18
Fibreswest
Cloverdale Exhibition Park Grounds
Cloverdale, British Columbia
fibreswest.com

March 17–19
Madison Knitters' Guild Knit-In
Alliant Energy Center
Madison, Wisconsin
madisonknittersguild.com

March 24–25
Carolina Fiber Fest
North Carolina State Fairgrounds
Raleigh, North Carolina
carolinafiberfest.org

March 24–26
Pittsburgh Knit & Crochet Festival
David L. Lawrence Convention Center
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
pghknitandcrochet.com

March 30–April 2
Interweave Yarn Fest
Embassy Suites Loveland Hotel,
Spa & Conference Center
Loveland, Colorado
interweaveyarnfest.com

March 30–April 2
Long Island Yarn Crawl
longislandyarncrawl.com

April 1–2
Alpacapalooza
Clark County Event Center
Ridgefield, Washington
alpacaawa.org

April 1–2
YarnCon
Chicago Journeymen Plumbers
Union Hall
Chicago, Illinois
yarncon.com

April 6–9
Minnesota Yarn Shop Hop
Minneapolis area
minnesotayarnshophop.com

April 7–9
Dallas-Fort Worth Fiber Fest
Irving Convention Center
Irving, Texas
dfwfiberfest.org

April 21–23
Smoky Mountain Fiber Arts Festival
Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center
Townsend, Tennessee
smokymountainfiberartsfestival.org

April 27–30
Stitches United
Connecticut Convention Center
& Marriott Hartford Downtown
Hartford, Connecticut
knittinguniverse.com

April 29
Connecticut Sheep, Wool and
Fiber Festival
Tolland County Agricultural Center
Vernon, Connecticut
ctsheep.com

April 29–30
Toronto Knitters Frolic
Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
frolic.torontoknittersguild.ca

May 6–7
Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, Maryland
sheepandwool.org

TNNA CREATES BUSINESS AND CREATIVE SERVICES SECTOR

In a change that should make it easier for service providers and retailers to connect—and for **TNNA** to address the needs of those service providers—TNNA has reframed the Teacher/Designer Group as the Business and Creative Services sector.

Previously, “a number of members were categorized under another membership type, such as ‘retailer,’ and potential members were listed ‘on someone’s badge’ [that is, listed as if they were employees of another company], because the previous application criteria were heavily biased toward bricks-and-mortar businesses that deal in product,” says Stacey Trock, who runs the amigurumi company FreshStitches. “We’ve revised the application requirements to more accurately reflect the growing demographic of online businesses. I expect our membership numbers to swell as word gets out.”

The BCS sector covers service providers including technical editors, teachers, knit/crochet/weaving designers, copywriters, graphic artists, photographers and videographers along with digital marketers, social media professionals, bloggers and podcasters. BCS sector members can now take advantage of educational webinars—one-hour online talks by industry experts—plus course offerings at TNNA shows that are being developed to directly apply to this sector.

“I’ve always found attending the show to be invaluable for my business. So when I had the chance to spearhead a new sector that’s built for independent and, very often, digital businesses like myself, I was delighted. This is the beginning of a new chapter for the industry,” says Trock. Learn more at www.tnna.org.

▼ Knitted Cable Sourcebook

By Norah Gaughan

Harry N. Abrams; \$29.95

ISBN: 978-1419722394

This book might well be the decade's drop-the-mic moment for cable knitting. Gaughan states that cables are formed simply "when a few stitches switch places with another few



stitches." For most knitters, that's an easy-to-follow theory for a basic 2/2RC, but she takes those crosses

to their extremes, creating more than 150 intricate original stitch patterns for this sourcebook. And some of them have been incorporated into the 15 patterns for sweaters, hats, scarves and an afghan too. Gaughan dissects the anatomy of cables so clearly that knitting brains that don't think the way hers does can still visualize how a certain cable will build. With that insight, some devotees of written instructions will likely switch to chart reading as a more expedient way of working the multirow-rep cable designs; the book provides both options.

▼ You Can Knit That

By Amy Herzog

Harry N. Abrams; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1419722479

Herzog's third book on knitting, which could just as easily be filed under the Maker/Handcrafts category, starts at the very beginning—not the cast-on, but the swatch, and what it and the pattern are telling you about



how well they will play together in the finished garment. The first three chapters, "Before," "During" and

"After," instill skill confidence without overwhelming knitters with every possible way they might execute every inc or dec, cast-on or bind-off. Beginners in particular are set off on the right path, and Herzog's in-progress tips help keep them there. Twenty-four patterns, each in a range of twelve sizes, appear in

order of difficulty (perceived or real) of sleeve construction—with vests and drop-shoulder styles first, and set-in sleeves rounding out the collection.

▼ Drop-Dead Easy Knits

By Gail Zucker, Mary Lou Egan and Kirsten Kapur

Clarkson Potter; \$16.99

ISBN: 978-0553459340

Pick it up, knit a bit, put it down without worry; repeat. Just about every knitter wants to have a project on the needles that fits that bill, and this collection serves up



30 patterns of just such easy-to-intuit, care-free knitting for adult and baby garments,

blankets, hats and cowls. (One not-to-be-missed project is guest designer Susan B. Anderson's adorable Bear in a Bunny Suit.) Zucker's photos deftly present full views of the finished pieces with a focus on the stitching, giving the knitter an informative in-process visual reference. The next time you make plans to binge-watch the latest Netflix drama or you're stuck in a waiting room, a drop-dead-easy design is just the type of project to cast on.

▼ On the Loom: A Modern Weaver's Guide

By Maryanne Moodie

Harry N. Abrams; \$27.50

ISBN: 978-1419722370

From a practical tote bag and rag rug to more whimsical wall hangings and necklaces, Moodie's 20-plus creations exude a warm



bohemian/vintage vibe. And though the expected straight and circular looms with warp-and-weft techniques are included, there are also ideas for using nontraditional DIY looms, including a bicycle basket, fork-shaped twigs and even hair on the head (the latter just might be

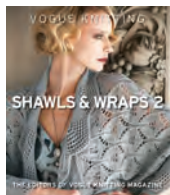
the thing to introduce an "I'm bored" teen to the craft). Moodie also encourages weavers to move beyond traditional threads and yarns and reach for raw silk or denim fabric strips, raffia, sheep's locks or roving to create personalized woven pieces.

▼ Vogue Knitting Shawls & Wraps 2

Sixth & Spring Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1942021506

If your pattern choices tend to be all about the shawl, then this book, the



second in a series, will fuel that obsession. The 35 varied pattern offerings let you switch things up—if you love

to knit lace, cast on a cabled wrap next time. Never tried beading or colorwork? There are patterns and tips for making them, too. Throw in some intarsia, steeking and double-knitting picks, and you'll expand your skills to become the reigning "wrap artist" at next week's knitting group.

▼ Go Big Knits

Trafalgar Square Books; \$18.95

ISBN: 978-1570767715

Sometimes we knitters are looking for a new challenge, and sometimes we just want a stylish, easy-to-accomplish knit. Don't want to fiddle with fit? This book includes 20 pat-



terns for mostly poncho, shrug and loose tunic or wrap styles. While close fit is not the focus, there are a few

shapelier styles (drop-shoulder pull-overs and open-front cardigans). The designs are photographed on self-described plus-size models, but the patterns are not exclusive to the upper range of sizes—the measurements for Small and Medium fall in the 34" to 38" bracket.

▼ Crochet Therapy

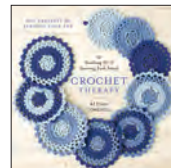
By Betsan Corkhill

Harry N. Abrams; \$21.95

ISBN: 978-1419721113

A pillow that mimics rippling water, a flowery friendship quilt, a circle of multihued-blue mandalas—just the

thought of stitching up one of these projects produces calm. They are but three of the 20 crochet patterns that Corkhill, a physiotherapist by trade, merges with meditative exer-



cises designed for makers of all kinds. Equal parts crochet and relaxation remedies,

Corkhill's projects aim to boost crochet's stress-reducing benefits, while basic stretching tips target the strain stitchers can feel in the arms and hands, head and neck.

▼ Big Book of Knitted Mittens

By Jorid Linvik

Trafalgar Square Books; \$27.95

ISBN: 978-1570767869

Linvik says she was far from an expert at colorwork when she set out to re-create a pair of bird-motif mittens from her childhood. But her stitch persistence paid off, not only in replacing those lost well-loved mitts but leading to the 45 patterns that comprise this book. If stranding has been a struggle for



you, take time to read Linvik's tips on dominant pattern colors and maybe work a flat swatch first (frame and

hang it later?) to get used to the rhythm of switching colors before working it in the round on dpns. From cat and dog to penguin, owl and hearts, the motifs are both charming and sophisticated for wearers of all ages.

▼ Needle Felting From Basics to Bears

By Liza J. Adams

Stackpole Books; \$22.95

ISBN: 978-0811716628



All the info to jump-start your needle-felting skills is here, along with instructions for making ornaments, phone charms, key chains, decorative dolls and pins. And then there are the fuzzy animals—the bears and bunnies, all with

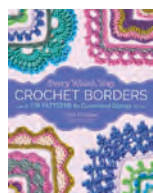
jointed limbs and adorably expressive faces. Even if you prefer to knit or crochet such toys rather than sculpt them out of wool, Adams's step-by-step closeup photos and tips can ensure that your yarny friends' faces come out cute, not cockeyed.

▼ Every Which Way Crochet Borders

By Edie Eckman

Storey Publishing; \$18.95

ISBN: 978-1612127408



Hey, knitters and seamstresses, go grab that hook! Just because you didn't crochet that last project doesn't mean it can't rock one of these 100-plus crocheted edgings. While many of the concepts of crochet—stitch and row counts, for instance—are familiar to knitters, the execution of them, as many know, can be tricky. Eckman's general how-to instructions, useful to both experienced and new crocheters, include different methods of joining yarns, completing rounds and troubleshooting when you're not quite sure you like the results you're getting. The photo directory of all the border patterns is pure eye candy.

▼ Cowl Girls 2

By Cathy Carron

Sixth&Spring Books; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1942021636

If it weren't the namesake follow-up to the first *Cowl Girls*, this collection could easily have been called *Cowl*



Cool. The proof? Ever see a cowl with a zippered, working pocket, or one that elegantly mixes faux fur with lace? How about a poncho/cowl hybrid? These are just a few of the new ideas among Carron's 32 patterns, which also include close-hugging gaiters, loose loop styles and capelets. And if your winter coat is a goes-with-everything neutral gray, tan or black, you'll find lots of color-punch designs to brighten up your look.

▼ Knitting Short Rows

By Jennifer Dassau

Interweave/F+W; \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1632502582

There are more than a few techniques that even the most experienced knitters sometimes shy away from, and short-row shaping ranks right up there. But Jennifer Dassau shows just how easy



short rows are to execute, starting with streamlined designs that make it easy for knitters to see exactly how such shaping works. Of the book's 17 patterns, the Trichotomy Shawl and Slices Shawl are good picks for the short-row novice; the shawls' shaping progresses without the distraction of working whole-body garment shaping at the same time. For those familiar with the ubiquitous wrap-and-turn technique, Dassau provides illustrated RS and WS how-tos for German, Japanese and twin-stitch short-row versions, and explains which one to use for best effect.

▼ 60 Quick Knits for Little Kids

Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95

ISBN: 978-1942021650

This latest installment in Cascade's "60 Quick" series uses the Pacific yarn line to create charming and



hard-wearing sweaters and hats, mittens, hoodies and more for girls and boys sizes 2 to 6. When you finish knitting for the little ones, you might be inspired to sharpen your math skills by upsizing a few of the sweater designs (cable-dip cardigan, turtleneck poncho, lace pullover) that would look great on Mom or Auntie too.

▼ Easy Fair Isle Knitting: 26 Projects with a Modern Twist

By Martin Storey

Trafalgar Square Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1570767852

One look through this striking collection and you'll be shocked to discover

that it is filled with only Fair Isle projects, with just two colors in each row. Using many colors in a single project, Martin makes dazzling designs that look more complicated than they are. The designs' small pattern repeats make them easy to memorize; graphic charts mean the patterns are easy to follow as well. A little surface embroidery and appliqué give garments an even more complex look—no tricky knitting required.



Pillows and blankets give knitters home-dec options, while scarves, vests, hats and more let stitchers adorn themselves with plenty of color. The upshot? Wielding two colors at once need not be daunting; Storey doesn't dwell on instruction in the technique, trusting that the simplicity of the projects will make them doable by all.

▼ Urban Knit Collection: 18 City-Inspired Knitting Patterns for the Modern Wardrobe

By Kyle Kunnecke

Interweave/F+W; \$26.99

ISBN: 978-1632500892



Kunnecke's first book features 18 modern designs ranging from the bold to the subtle. The designer is known for his mastery of colorwork, so it's no surprise that many colorful projects are in the mix. Colorblocking is prevalent, as is intricate colorwork featuring an attractive wrong side when his technique of locked floats is used. But colorwork isn't the only thing you'll find: Textured mitts, a cabled wrap and a twisted-stitch hat pattern are included for knitters of all skill levels. Helpful diagrams and step-by-steps for various techniques round out the lessons.

BESTSELLER WATCH

Here's what topped the bestseller lists the first week of December 2016:

Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

1. *Knitted Cable Sourcebook*, by Norah Gaughan (Harry N. Abrams)
2. *Knitting From the North*, by Hilary Grant (Roost Books)
3. *750 Knitting Stitches* (St. Martin's Griffin)
6. *Stitch 'n Bitch*, by Debbie Stoller (Workman)
7. *The Knitter's Book of Knowledge*, by Debbie Bliss (Lark Crafts)
12. *Yarn•i•tec•ture*, by Jillian Moreno (Storey)

Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

1. *A to Z Crochet* (Martingale & Co.)
2. *Star Wars Crochet*, by Lucy Collins (Thunder Bay Press)
4. *Crochet One-Skein Wonders*, edited by Judith Durant and Edie Eckman (Storey)
5. *The Complete Book of Crochet Stitch Designs*, by Linda P. Schapper (Lark Crafts)
7. *Crochet Style*, by Jennifer Dougherty (Page Street Publishing)

Barnes & Noble Knitting List

1. *Basic Knitting Projects*, by Leigh Ann Chow (Stackpole Books)
2. *Knitted Cable Sourcebook*, by Norah Gaughan (Harry N. Abrams)
3. *400 Knitting Stitches* (Potter Craft)
5. *Highland Knits*, by the editors of Interweave (Interweave/F+W)
6. *The Knitter's Book of Knowledge*, by Debbie Bliss (Lark Crafts)

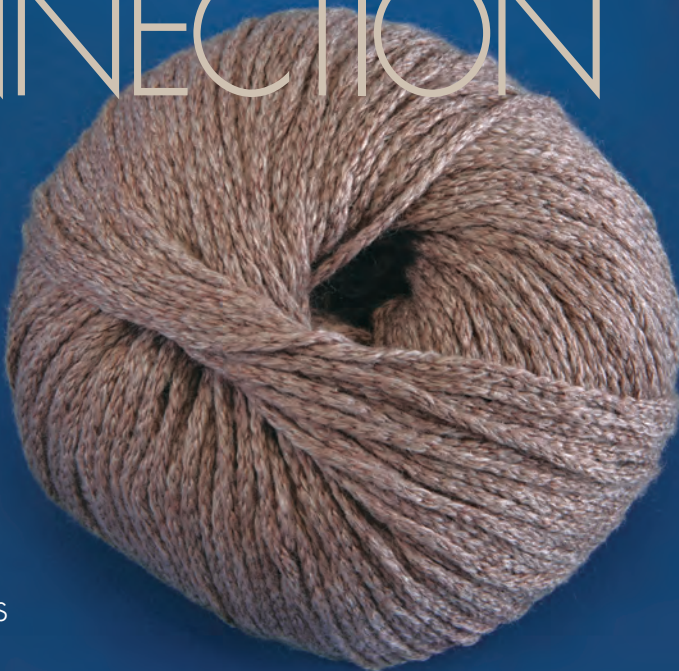
YARN FORWARD

COTTON CONNECTION

As the price of cotton rises, yarn companies are making lemonade by looping it into chainettes of all sorts, creating more lightweight, supple cotton yarns in the process.

By Christina Behnke

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCUS TULLIS



Berroco Cotelana

Specs: 13 colors; 47% wool/47% cotton/6% nylon; 109yds/50g
Gauge: 18 sts = 4" on U.S. 8 needles
Distinctions: Despite its high percentage, wool plays a supporting role in this balanced blend, lending softness and loft to the otherwise cool, cottony hand. The snugly stitched I-cord chainette is nicely rounded, yielding buoyant stitch definition; a touch of nylon adds strength.
Projects: Cotelana strikes a pleasant balance between definition and drape, making it a good choice for three-season wardrobe essentials like boyfriend cardis, textured ponchos and lightweight accessories.



Trendsetter Yarns Estrella

Specs: 10 colors; 70% cotton/15% viscose/15% nylon; 125yds/50g
Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7 needles
Distinctions: Estrella features a smooth, matte cotton tube peppered with knit-in slubs; alternately lustrous and feathery, they embellish fabrics without weighing down the airy base.
Projects: Whether knit or crochet, simple stitches flaunt Estrella's textures to best effect. Let it do the heavy lifting in a quick-to-stitch tank or tee, or experiment with texture placement in a sideways-knit shawl.

Rozetti Yarns/Universal Yarn Lumen

Specs: 12 colors and 8 multis; 79% cotton/21% viscose; 134yds/50g
Gauge: 21 sts = 4" on U.S. 6 needles
Distinctions: Purists might call Lumen—a matte cotton dappled with shiny stretches of viscose—a ribbon yarn. Nonetheless, its tube-like construction of fine-knit thread lends it the same lofty qualities as a traditional chainette—with a smoother patina and fun duotone effect.
Projects: An inexpensive choice for sweaters, Lumen shines in basic stockinette, the juxtaposed textures creating a subtly striated fabric. In knit or crochet mesh, the viscose yields glittery slubs.





Juniper Moon Farm/KFI Neve

Specs: 30 colors; 100% pima cotton; 222yds/100g

Gauge: 18–22 sts = 4" on U.S. 6–7 needles

Distinctions: For all its gently gleaming texture, Neve is actually quite simple: a smooth pima cotton thread loosely knit into a lofty I-cord. The chainette construction creates a wonderfully lightweight and breathable yarn with plenty of yardage.

Projects: Neve loves lace yet looks surprisingly crisp in straightforward colorwork. The shade selection can't be beat for a yarn of this type, so indulge your color cravings in stripes, chevrons and colorblocking.



Stacy Charles Fine Yarns Patti

Specs: 10 colors; 100% cotton; 98yds/50g

Gauge: 15 sts = 4" on U.S. 9 needles

Distinctions: If high-end jersey were embodied in yarn, Patti might be the result. Soft fine-knit cotton fabric encases a cloud of cotton fiber, creating a tubular structure that's naturally supple. While stitch definition rivals the springiest wools, fabrics boast soft, figure-hugging drape.

Projects: Reserve this everyday luxury for sweaters. Patti's sculptural properties work especially well in patterns that pair yarns of contrasting scale and fiber—for instance, colorwork and condo knitting.



Bernat Maker Home Dec

Specs: 8 solid and 8 variegated colors; 72% cotton/28% nylon; 317yds/250g

Gauge: 13 sts = 4" on U.S. 11 needles

Distinctions: A smooth fine-knit cotton tube filled with nylon fiber, Maker Home Dec fits squarely in the category of high-fashion tube yarns—with a much more attainable price tag. Even the simplest stitch patterns adopt an eye-popping sculptural quality.

Projects: In case the name didn't tip you off, a put-up like this begs for blankets. Crochet is especially lovely, creating shell stitches that puff up like popcorn.

Classic Elite Yarns Calista

Specs: 13 colors; 100% mercerized cotton; 142yds/50g

Gauge: 20–24 sts = 4" on U.S. size 5–8 needles

Distinctions: Calista's metallic properties border on uncanny. Sleek yet crisp, with a hard-gloss sheen, its crocheted construction looks strikingly similar to a fine metal chain. For mercerized cotton, it's exceptionally bouncy.

Projects: A comparatively affordable choice for refined, drapery garments, Calista pairs best with simple knit and crochet stitches that flaunt its unusual texture. (We won't judge if you tie leftover strands around your wrist bracelet-style.)



*yarn reviews
continue on
page 18*

COTTON CONNECTION



Rowan Softyak DK

Specs: 20 colors; 76% cotton/15% yak/9% nylon; 148yds/50g

Gauge: 22 sts = 4" on U.S. 6 needles

Distinctions: Softyak DK embodies the warm-weather elegance of a cotton/cashmere cardi, exchanging the cashmere for more affordable yak (which offers a similar high micron count). The two fibers absorb dye differently, creating the gently heathered shades.

Projects: Dreaming of a summery sweater? Expand your search to fall patterns: This firm I-cord chainette boasts enough elasticity that you could swap it for DK-weight 100% wool without sacrificing stitch definition.



Shibui Knits Rain

Specs: 13 colors; 100% cotton; 135yds/50g

Gauge: 22 sts = 4" on U.S. 6 needles

Distinctions: Rain celebrates cotton at its most elegant, using a clever construction to showcase the gleam of mercerized cotton. The loosely crocheted chain forms long "links" that magnify the fiber's reflective properties—think of a placid lake—without sacrificing structure.

Projects: Open crochet takes on glittering dimension that elevates shawls and summer tops. Knit stockinette/reverse stockinette creates a respective shiny/matte patina. Experiment with this effect in waterfall cardis or reversible scarves.



Plymouth Yarn Co. Driftone

Specs: 8 colors; 100% mercerized cotton; 142yds/50g

Gauge: 24 sts = 4" on U.S. 5 needles

Distinctions: Known for its sheen and strength, mercerized cotton is traditionally used in crochet lace—though plied put-ups for knitting can be heavy. Driftone adds some air into the equation with a rounded, cord-like chainette. The luminous finish complements the tonal shades.

Projects: Supple with a slight bounce thanks to the I-cord weave, Driftone takes nicely to texture-patterned summer tops and scarves. Play up the variegated colors with multi-directional knits or crochet motifs.

eucalyptus

lavender

grapefruit

unscented

jasmine



www.eucalan.com

A New Year, a New TNNA

My first few months as executive director of TNNA have been exciting ones. I've enjoyed meeting with so many members to learn about their goals and aspirations, and I'm eager to work alongside all of you to help promote the needlearts industry.

As the new year begins, TNNA is introducing changes, too. We're working with a brand-new staff to bring our members the best year-round membership experiences possible with our trade shows, marketing tools, publications and communications, technology and educational opportunities. Of course, they'll continue to help us support popular TNNA initiatives including Spinzilla, the NeedleArts Mentoring Program and Stitch 'N' Pitch.

We're currently ramping up for the winter trade show in San Jose, California (January 21-23) to explore what's new and exciting in the yarn industry. It's the perfect place to network with other needlearts professionals, see the latest in spring and summer trends, and walk

the largest needlearts trade-show floor. Several trade-show favorites will be returning, including the Fashion Show, Sample IT! and more.

I'm particularly excited about the show's educational opportunities. This year we focus on a number of topics, including **business data made simple**: Learn how to manage your cash flow, plan your marketing and invest in your future by using existing data. **Expanding your expertise (and your business)**: It's never too late to improve your skills or learn new tricks. Build educational, skill and technique classes into your offerings to increase business, plus learn how to hire teachers and staff. **The two-way conversation**: Master ways to engage with your customers through social media, marketing and event planning. Communicate effectively with your vendors to develop a more strategic relationship. **Leveraging new tools and technology**: Learn how to effectively utilize today's technology, including software, digital photography and mobile devices.

Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity

to escape the winter doldrums. More information can be found at TNNA.org/Winter. If you aren't able to join us in January, we'd love to see you at the summer show in Columbus, Ohio, from June 10-12. In what other place can such a large group of enthusiastic retailers, wholesalers, teachers and industry professionals gather to share and inspire?

In 2016, we launched TNNA's Business Webinar series with great success. These one-hour webinars, led by industry experts, are designed to help you develop and grow your business. Keep an eye out for new and exciting educational opportunities this year.

Join today at TNNA.org to take advantage of all the exclusive benefits that the organization has to offer: online education, business marketing tools and advice, industry research, trade-show events, networking and more. Already a member? Don't forget to renew your membership for another year of incredible programming and resources.

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.

BeSweetYarns.com

MangoMoonYarns.com

DaleGarnNorthAmerica.com



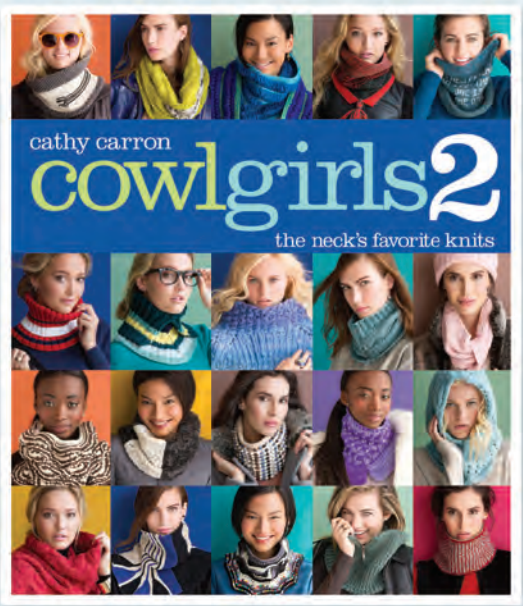


So many choices


Contact your rep or call us 989 • 723 • 5259

The Neck's Favorite Knits from Cathy Carron

Softcover with flaps • ISBN: 978-1-942021-63-6 • 144 pages • \$19.95



sixthandspringbooks.com



Stitch It Forward

Do you remember who taught you how to knit or crochet? Was it your grandmother or a family friend? Did you take a class or teach yourself? Whoever it was, I'm sure you will be forever thankful you were given such a wonderful, stress-busting gift.

Teaching and sharing our passion for yarn crafting is very much the focus of Craft Yarn Council's ongoing projects. The CYC offers numerous programs and initiatives whose aim is to encourage knitters and crocheters to teach others these crafts. First is I Love Yarn Day, which turned six years old in October. For the past two years, CYC and its members have encouraged yarn lovers to Stitch It Forward on ILYD by teaching at least one other person how to knit or crochet on that day. We estimate 20,000 people have been taught on this day alone.

Our second program is the Certified Instructors Program, open to anyone who has strong basic knitting or crochet skills. Students are required to complete coursework, submit student teaching hours and be evaluated by their

Master Teacher. This program is widely known to boost the confidence students have in their own crochet or knitting skills and increase their ability to convey these skills to others.

A third program that CYC sponsors reaches schools and educators nationwide. Co-sponsored by Jo-Ann Stores, the program has donated 290,000 learn-to-knit or -crochet kits to teachers across the United States. Those teachers are stitching it forward by sharing their love of the craft with their students.

No group recognizes the importance of stitching it forward better than local yarn retailers, who provide over-the-counter advice on a daily basis along with informative and fun class offerings. As Kris Porritt and Lisa Ruesch, co-owners of Cream City Yarns in Brookfield, Wisconsin, point out, "Classes provide inspiration, motivation and education. And they help build sales."

To keep the class offerings interesting at Cream City Yarns, Porritt and Ruesch survey their customers to come up with the best ways to help them advance their crafting skills. For

instance, their e-classes, a series of online classes, were developed for students who are not able to visit the shop regularly. The videos and photos are labor-intensive to produce, but the co-owners agree: "The time investment is worth it."

Jessica Reininger, store manager of Twisted Ewe in Garden City, Idaho, explains the shop's philosophy of stitching it forward: "For six years we've worked on building our reputation for support and help, whether it's answering a specific question at the counter, our Open Knit Night or through our classes. There's a social aspect—a sharing—that you see in our group classes, which has a positive impact and helps customers build confidence and keeps them coming back. For us, it's fun, not just work."

Reininger touches on the key components of CYC's Stitch It Forward initiatives: education, social contact and fun. The bottom line is that we are all working to ensure a healthy future for our industry by engaging current crocheters and knitters and reaching a new generation.

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

A large skein of multi-colored hand-dyed yarn, featuring shades of teal, light blue, yellow, and pink, is the central focus. The background is white with artistic watercolor splashes in blue, yellow, and red. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for "LORNA'S LACES" which includes a stylized purple 'L' inside a circle, followed by the text "LORNA'S LACES" and "HAND-DYED YARNS" in a serif font. Below this, the tagline "We make pretty string." is written in a cursive script, followed by the website "www.lornaslaces.net/string.html" and "TNNA Booth #551 and 553".



New Resources

TNNA has undergone so many exciting changes since I began my tenure as Yarn Group chair in 2015. As an organization, we have been working to determine how we can best address the needs of a quickly changing marketplace. To that end, we hired consulting firm McKinley Research to find out what our members most want from TNNA and to help us execute those plans. McKinley has been conducting interviews, surveys and focus groups of TNNA members and industry non-members. The results will be presented to the board early this year.

As I write this article, the January trade show in San Jose is looming large on the horizon. We are gearing up for a fantastic event, with fashion show participation from all product segments, as well as a newly designed Friday night gala event for all TNNA members. Look for a redesigned Discover What's New area, as well as a more user-friendly lounge and registration area. The winter show's edu-

cational offerings are also not to be missed. New education coordinator Alexis Winslow has worked with the education committee to reformat teacher compensation, class structure and class offerings. Be sure to check out the Building Better Business track.

Yarn Group has taken advantage of our staff's expertise and is working on launching a new grant program for yarn retailers. Last year at the June show, we launched a new sponsorship program, the Elite Sponsor, which allows Yarn Group wholesale members to easily support all of the trade show initiatives. We are going to use the sponsorship funds from our industry-dedicated sponsors—Stitchcraft Marketing, Bryson Distributing, Stitch Sprouts, Universal Yarn and ChiaoGoo—to fund a series of Yarn Group grants to bricks-and-mortar shop owners to help them update their digital and online systems. For some, this may be as simple as a new computer or POS system; for others, it could mean a new website design

or online shop to complement their retail space. For wholesale suppliers, working with shops that are not utilizing efficient technologies can make conducting business more difficult. Shops may be using an obsolete inventory tracking system or simply not know how to utilize email effectively to maintain an e-newsletter. In some cases, shops are working solely on paper and do not have a computer in the store, which makes good buying practices difficult. Building this partnership between wholesale and retail members helps the industry as a whole grow and stay healthy. Look for more information on the Yarn Group Digital Technology Grant later in 2017.

Don't miss out on what's happening in our industry. Check out the new Yarn Group website, YarnGroup.org, to stay abreast of the latest news and updates. The website also provides members with a private message board, LYS finder, Yarn Group member directory and events calendar. See you in San Jose.

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



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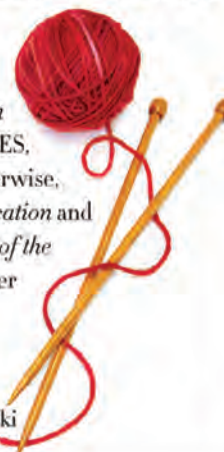
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SPINNING & WEAVING GROUP

BY RITA PETTEYS, CHAIRPERSON



Calling All Fiber Artists

One of the most rewarding things about being a yarn shop owner is watching your customers become inspired and more creative and hearing how they are ready to try new techniques, new fibers and new equipment.

Many people love the social aspects of working on their fiber-arts projects with like-minded crafters. Events that offer customers an opportunity to be with their friends as they learn new techniques can help your shop's bottom line as well. Following are examples that may work for you:

Spinning Nights: If your shop has the room and a staff member or community leader to lead one, host a weekly, biweekly or monthly spinning night. Consider your local guilds: Do they have spinning groups? Would they like to meet at your shop?

Fiber Nights: Schedule an evening for the open pursuit of all types of fiber arts. Welcome knitters, spinners, crocheters, needlepoint

enthusiasts, weavers, counted-thread fans, felters—everyone! Ask your customers and attendees to bring a friend and perhaps offer a small incentive for those who do. Make your newsletter and a mailing/email signup sheet available for new customers.

Late-Night Fiber Parties: Fridays can be a slow night at fiber and needlearts shops; consider scheduling a monthly Friday event that runs later than usual. It can be a fun almost-pajama-party gathering that works in conjunction with a trunk show, box opening, the beginning of a spinning/weaving/knitting/crochet-along, or book release and signing. Try these once a month or bimonthly. Setting a solid schedule for six months or more can help you organize and publicize your event.

Regularly Scheduled Events: Local or national events provide a framework for your business's participation. Learn more about two of the most popular—I Love Yarn Day and Spinzilla—at craftyarncouncil.com/I-Love-Yarn

and www.spinzilla.org, respectively.

Want to try weaving at your shop? Inspire customers with small projects to pique their interest. Perhaps they'd like to start with a rigid heddle weaving class. Scheduling demonstrations of warping and weaving on a rigid heddle loom, either separately or on an open fiber night, will introduce your customers to a new technique and can help you gauge their interest in learning more.

Don't forget to publicize these events via social media and your shop's email newsletter. Research the broad range of ways to host, promote and organize events that will help your customers develop stronger ties to their fiber-arts friends and your shop and foster a greater sense of satisfaction in their fiber-arts and needlearts pursuits. Try a few out and see what happens; take notes about what worked and how people heard about your events and continue to do those things that bring customers through your doors.

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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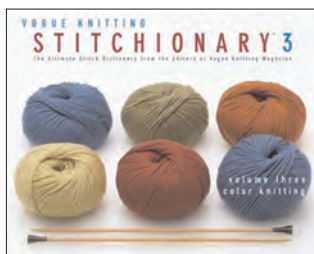
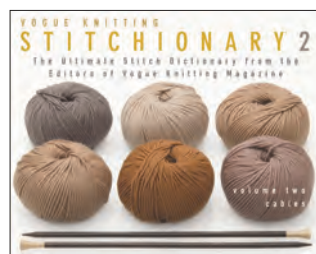
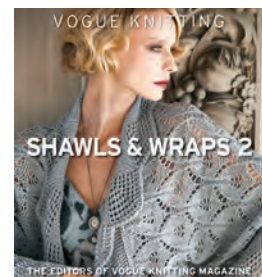
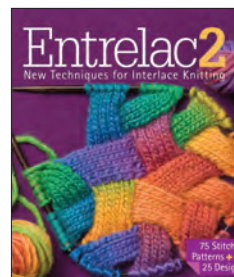
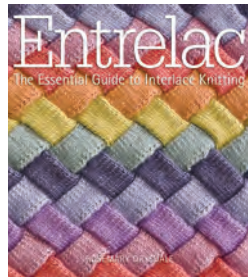
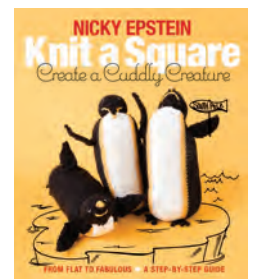
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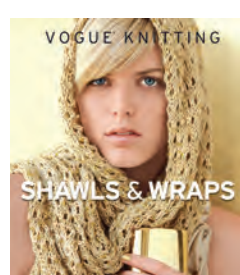
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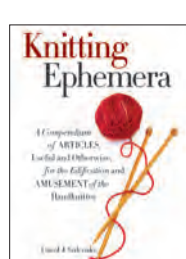
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A Letter From the Future

Ten years ago, a 20-something yarn fanatic rolled the dice and opened an online store. I was a yarn bomber turned entrepreneur. I was the kid who made costumes for Elmwood High School's annual fall productions. In college, I didn't join the student council or a fraternity; I crocheted hats, scarves, gloves and anything else I could sell to pay my way. I knew starting my own business was a risk—especially when you factor in the student loans—but I was young and inspired, and I wanted to make my passion my career.

I exhibited my creations at local craft fairs; I harnessed social media to expand my reach. I started making new items and sold other merchandise to attract more buyers. When I ran out of ideas, I turned, as all 20-somethings do, to the Internet. I Googled “unique ways to grow your business”; “how to generate more online sales”; “tips for online retailers”; “I need new ideas—help!”

That's when I learned about the Craft & Hobby

Association, “the premier trade association for the creative arts products industry.” Its mission: “to inspire the next generation of creativity through sharing and teaching.” I was hesitant—I was a small-business maker, not a big-box retailer with brand recognition and millions in sales. Could an organization with such a large and diverse membership actually cater to my needs—needs I might not even know I have? I gave them a call, and after speaking with the membership coordinator, I decided to roll the dice and join. If anything, I thought, I would get my act together and form a plan for what I wanted to accomplish over the next 10 years.

I formed a business plan all right, but that is probably the least notable outcome of my decision to join CHA. I took seminars that taught me how to market my products, grow my customer base and stay true to my values. I learned how to legally protect my products and ideas, and a whole lot more that I had never considered before. I met people like me—former yarn geeks

and newcomers who followed their hearts. We became our own cohort; we shared our experiences and learned from each other's successes and failures. I also interacted with people who I would read about in industry news outlets, people who I could now call my peers and mentors.

I discovered a culture that I never knew existed, where ideas are nurtured and spur innovations and trends. This culture inspired me to look at all aspects of my business differently, all the way down to the materials I use and how they impact the environment and others. The Craft & Hobby Association helped me become who I am today, a 30-something small-business owner who supports a family of four, gives back to my community and mentors entrepreneurs (and who is also opening his fifth store next Tuesday).

If you can relate to the person I am now or the one I was 10 years ago, the Association is what you need to drive your business forward. Roll the dice and join the Craft & Hobby Association. Visit www.craftandhobby.org.

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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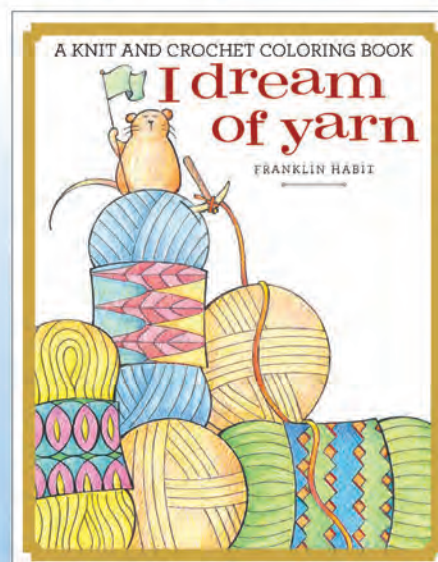


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A Decade of Ravelry

We are looking forward to celebrating a decade of community with Ravelers around the world. At the heart of Ravelry is our database, which allows you to search all the patterns, projects, pattern sources, designers, yarns, yarn brands, stash entries, people, groups and forum posts on Ravelry. One of the major improvements we're currently implementing is a revamp of our yarn database. Years ago, we added attributes to the pattern database entries, enabling users to focus on specific characteristics of patterns in their searches. Now we're adding yarn attributes as well, which will give us new ways to search for yarns and search through projects based on yarn characteristics.

Searchable yarn attributes include Yarn Origins, noting the country in which various phases of the yarn's production took place; Specific Fiber Types, including breeds; Yarn Characteristics, including its care, treatments (such as superwash or moth-proofed), sustainability, dye information and color attributes (such as self-striping or variegated); Construction, including whether a yarn includes

beads, fits within a category of novelty yarns, and information about its plies; Drafting Methods; and Put-up.

We began updating this information by asking a few yarn brands to test the attribute entry system. From there, we asked yarn producers to fill in as much information as possible. Last September, we added these attributes to our yarn search and continued to write Ravelry yarnies to request they fill out the information for their yarns.

Working with yarn companies and our users, we hope to have accurate and complete information filled in for as many entries as possible, giving you more search options and possibilities when you're trying to find that perfect yarn.

Yarn shops have been a vital part of the Ravelry community since the beginning, and we are grateful that their participation only continues to increase. Yarn store owners use Ravelry in their shops to help meet their customers' needs, and they are also our ambassadors, sharing about Ravelry, encouraging new members to join and helping to build their shops' community within their own Ravelry groups.

Last September we took a look at some Ravelry LYS statistics. Our yarn store directory includes listings of more than 6,100 yarn shops in 64 countries; more than 1,600 shops have Ravelry groups. More than 1.3 million Ravelry users have added more than 4.9 million yarn purchases to their Ravelry stashes and linked the purchase to a yarn shop in our directory, becoming what we call "patrons" of a yarn shop. (The most-stashed yarn brand is Cascade Yarns, with 447,126 stash entries from an LYS.) Finally, we were thrilled to see that yarn stores have sold 372,581 patterns through our continually growing In-Store Pattern Sales program.

Reaching 10 years is a great milestone for any business, and we're so proud to have a decade of growth with our wonderful community under our belt. Technology changes quickly, but in our industry it's comforting to know that people will always want to find great patterns, beautiful yarns and fibers, well-made tools, friendly shops, and other fiber enthusiasts to connect with. Here's to the beginning of our next decade together.

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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Major Changes at TKGA

Since 2001, The Knitting Guild Association has been owned and managed by Offinger Management Company. In April 2016, OMC decided to dissolve TKGA but agreed to turn the entire organization over to the Master Hand Knitting Committee, which decided unanimously that it would not allow TKGA and its programs to die. TKGA is now an independent organization and a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit.

The transition from OMC's management to our independent operation was completed on October 31. The inaugural TKGA board of directors include Arenda Holladay, President; Leslie Gonzalez, Vice President of Certification; Binka Schwan, Vice President of Education; Mary Beth Jacobs, Treasurer; Christina Hanger, Secretary. All of the board members are volunteers and do not receive any compensation.

Although we had to start from scratch as a new organization, we are honoring all existing memberships. The current educational programs and certification programs have not changed.

The only exception is the Master Machine Knitting Program: No new candidates will be allowed to purchase the program owing to the lack of active committee members. Only those currently enrolled will be able to attain Master status. We will revisit this periodically should any Master Machine Knitters wish to reactivate the committee. The Master Hand Knitting Program will stay the same; if you are currently enrolled, your records and payments will transfer to the new organization. The same is true for those enrolled in any of the correspondence courses.

The first major change will be to *Cast On* magazine. The Fall 2016 issue was the last print edition. The financial realities of producing the magazine contributed to Offinger's decision to bow out of TKGA. We will continue to produce *Cast On*, but the new version will be digital only, and the educational component will be expanded. Expect articles and patterns to enhance your skills, as well as the fashion-forward designs you have come to expect. We will also produce a monthly newsletter filled with tips, reviews

and, occasionally, free patterns.

Last July, the last joint TKGA/CGOA conference was held in Charleston, SC. Offinger and CGOA will continue to host an annual conference, but TKGA will no longer participate. As we grow as an organization, we intend to hold educational seminars and retreats, but they will be geared toward our membership. Since travel has become so expensive, we plan to hold one- and two-day seminars in cities that are within driving distance of our members. These seminars will focus on topics of interest to those working on the Master Hand Knitting Program; the curriculum will be similar to the very popular Master Day events we held at the annual conferences.

We look forward to a streamlined organization that is better designed to meet your knitting-education needs. Please be patient during this transition time. Our monthly newsletter for members will provide updates on programs, educational opportunities and membership. If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at arendje.tkg@gmail.com.

The Knitting Guild Association (TKGA) is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting knitting. Its official publication is *Cast On* magazine, published quarterly.



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CROCHET GUILD OF AMERICA

BY SUSAN SULLIVAN, PRESIDENT



At the Heart of CGOA

The mission of the Crochet Guild of America is to encourage and support the art and education of crochet while preserving the history of this important fiber art, and we are proud to be the only national organization with this focus. Let's take a stroll through the CGOA landscape to see what we offer that helps us fulfill our mission and enrich our members' crochet experience.

Annual Conference: An important aspect of CGOA is our annual conference, where a crochet enthusiast can spend four days taking classes, buying yarn and accessories in the marketplace, and taking over the hotel lounge area until the wee hours.

Design Competition: The annual design competition is open to members only. The pieces—92 in 2016—are displayed and judged at the conference, and prizes are awarded on site. We are so fortunate to have generous sponsor support; this year, we awarded \$5,700 in prize

money. This competition has been the springboard for a number of new designers.

CGOA Master of Crochet Advanced Stitches and Techniques Program: Known in the organization as The Master's Program, this course allows crocheters to demonstrate their advanced skills and knowledge by perfectly completing a collection of 48 swatches and answering a series of thought-provoking questions. Each student's work is reviewed by a panel of individuals who have completed the program themselves and are qualified to determine if the work meets the stringent definition of master's-quality work.

Professional Development: Those interested in pursuing a career in the crochet industry will find many opportunities within CGOA to receive valuable instruction and mentoring, including the areas of designing, technical editing and contract stitching. Over the years, CGOA has offered at our annual conference a Professional Develop-

ment Day geared to the business side of crochet—valuable information to those interested in learning from veterans how to prepare, what to expect, and how to approach companies interested in hiring their services.

Publishing Industry Contacts: On the Saturday morning of the conference, all members are invited to participate in an Editor Meet-and-Greet session, during which they can present design concepts directly to book and magazine editors from the industry. Each person is allowed 10 minutes with an editor, so everyone has an opportunity to pitch his or her ideas.

I hope this quick tour gave you a snapshot of how CGOA provides opportunities for crocheters to connect with others who share their passion, and how it educates and mentors as well. Visit crochet.org for information about the 2017 conference, which will take place in Chicago from July 26–29.

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



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Meet the Press

If a writer from a newspaper or magazine should call you today, would you be ready to respond?

BY DARYL BROWER

We all love a good story. And when the story told is one about the business you've so painstakingly built, the payoff can be very worthwhile: credibility with new and existing customers, exposure in front of a new audience and even a boost in sales. But for a story to spread, it needs to be a good one. And if you don't tell yours effectively, your shop may not get the attention it deserves.

Put It in Writing

Many otherwise-eloquent shop owners find themselves tongue-tied when a reporter rings. To avoid stumbling over your words when the press comes knocking (or, more likely, calling or emailing), it helps to do a little advance preparation. Every shop should have a press kit—a printed or digital brag book about the shop—on hand both for self-promotion and to provide background information. A press kit doesn't have to be fancy, but at a minimum it should include an "about us" section that explains what your shop is, what it offers and what makes it special. Include a section that lists your shop address, phone number, website, store hours and a point of contact. List any business or industry awards you've received, plus charity and community projects you're involved in. Include photographs (inside and out) and your shop logo, as well as copies of or links to any other press you've received, be it a story in the local paper or a blog post about your store. This way, you have something to hand over when a reporter does call.

Think Fast

Writers have deadlines. If you don't respond promptly to a request, you risk being passed over for another retailer more willing to speak immediately or at a more convenient time within the writer's timeline. You should also prepare your staff by making them understand that calls like these are important and worth interrupting you in the office or at home should they come through. Requests made by email should also be given prompt attention. If you don't have time to answer all the questions that instant, give a time when you will reply, and then follow through as promised.

Question Authority

When questions are presented to you—via email or phone or in person—make sure your answers have some meat to them. Single-word responses give writers and reporters little to go on. Flesh out your response with relevant details and anecdotes that will add to the story and give the interviewer building blocks for further questions. Talk not only about your brilliant staff and the great classes and yarns you offer but how the experience of coming into your shop makes your customers feel. Add an anecdote about a regular client who tells you that time in your store is her method of stress relief; talk about the customer from the other side of the country who makes a point of stopping in whenever she's in town on business. Answers like these give the writer more to work with and will help build a better picture of why her readers should know more about you. When the interview ends, ask if there's anything else the reporter needs. And if you think of something you should have said during the interview but didn't, follow up with an email. (But don't ask to read the article before publication; that's a no-no for most magazines and newspapers, print or otherwise.)

Spread the News

Don't forget to ask the reporter when article will be published so you have time to promote the feature and prepare for any extra traffic that may come your way as a result. Publicity garners more publicity, so make sure your customers—and anyone else who might click on your web page or wander into your shop—know when you've been in the news. Enlarge and laminate a copy of the article and hang it near the register or slip it into a plastic frame on the checkout counter. You should also create a press page on your website—a separate section where pdfs or links to press you've received can be archived. This page can pay off in two ways: customers get to know you better and reporters searching for a source will have some background by which to judge whether or not your store will be a good fit for their story.

Publicity is a powerful thing; don't squander the opportunity when it comes your way. Tell your story, tell it well, and people will listen.

Camera Ready

It's likely you'll be asked to supply the photos that will accompany the story. Prevent a last-minute scramble by having print-quality, high-resolution digital photographs at the ready. Files lifted from your website or snapped with your iPhone may be fine for online-only publications, but if the story is going to print, they aren't going to cut it. For print you'll need .tif or .jpeg files that are at least 300 dpi at a minimum of 4 x 6 inches. Anything smaller will look grainy and distorted.

If you have the financial means, consider hiring a professional to take the photos. Yes, it may be costly, but the expense will result in photos that make customers want to visit your store. Take both interior and exterior shots of the shop looking its best, as well as shots of you and your staff. Try a few little vignettes too—a cropped-in shot of your yarn wall, a closeup of a beautiful button display, an artful arrangement of sample garments and the books and yarns used to make them, customers gathered companionably around your worktable. These are much more visually interesting and create a mood much more effectively than a shot of your empty classroom or a view of the checkout counter. (One caveat: If your photos include customers, make sure they've signed a release allowing you to publicly share the photos.) Give some thought to how the exterior of your building is presented as well. If it's not a particularly attractive setting, crop in close for a shot of your signage or the front door. Make sure you have a means of sharing these photos as well. Large files can be sent to publications via free services like You Send It, WeTransfer or Dropbox; better yet, create a gallery on your website from which high-resolution files can be downloaded.

Daryl Brower is a freelance writer based in New Jersey. She is the author of the retail profiles featured in *Vogue Knitting*, *Yarn Market News* and other publications.



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Shelf Awareness

Take stock of your stock and make a plan for 2017 to increase sales.

BY KIMBERLY AGBAYANI

The new year is a great time to evaluate current practices and consider implementing new tools that support your store's operations. Once systems are in place, you have more freedom to focus on the creative pursuits that most likely drew you to this industry.

Assess Your Shelves

A fundamental principle of inventory management is understanding how quickly your inventory is moving and taking steps to establish a healthy pace so you can keep your assets as liquid as possible, which will allow you to take on exciting new products. At Tolt Yarn and Wool, we keep an eye on the big picture by checking our total inventory, as well as the inventory of specific vendors, each week. We are constantly making sure that our product mix is one that works best for our shop and that

we are releasing what is no longer working.

Jaime Jennings, co-owner of Fancy Tiger Crafts in Denver, does weekly counts of one vendor per week. This rolling inventory count not only creates accurate inventory numbers; it also makes it unnecessary for the store to close for a few days for staff to complete a single, burdensome year-end inventory count. Additionally, this process allows Fancy Tiger to count the inventory of most vendors more than once a year.

For those who haven't read my article "Categorically Speaking" in the May 2016 issue, category management is a systematic way to create an optimal mix of products in your store by evaluating inventory based on categories. There are many ways to approach category management, from defining a category in the broadest possible terms to creating a very detailed one.

Kennedy Berry, store manager and IT director at Hill Country Weavers in Austin, Texas, says that keeping things simple works best for her store. Says Berry, "We track broadly by type of product and more narrowly by vendor and yarn line. We find this works well for knowing what brands/yarns are doing well when it comes time to decide what to re-order."

Liz Neddo of Wool & Honey in Cedar, Michigan, says that she and her co-owner use category management techniques to help them choose the perfect mix of products that reflect their particular vision. At Brooklyn General Store in Brooklyn, New York, owner Catherine Clark approaches category management by first doing a visual check of her store. She then backs up her visual assessment with reports from her POS system to move forward with her decision making.

Learn the Lingo

- **Days on hand**, literally the number of days your inventory is on hand, is also referred to as inventory turnover or "turns." The equation to figure out days on hand is: $\text{total retail value of current inventory (TRV) divided by projected gross yearly sales (PYS) multiplied by 365}$, or $(\text{TRV/PYS}) \times 365 = \text{days on hand}$.
- **Pars** are an ideal number of a certain product and can keep your inventory from being too heavy or too light.
- **Category management** can be as simple or complex as is appropriate for your store. Start broad, then break it down as necessary. Use the categories you create to evaluate sections of inventory and make sure they are the right fit for your store.
- **Comparative sales** give a snapshot of the direction sales are going, usually expressed by a percentage. To find that percentage, take the gross sales of two sales periods (SP1 and SP2, for example): $[(\text{SP2/SP1}) - 1] \times 100 = \text{comparative sales percentage}$. A positive percentage equals sales growth; a negative percentage indicates a decline in sales.
- **Sales projections** give us a baseline for planning both for purchasing and staffing, among other things. Projections require comparative sales information to form. First, you need an average year-over-year comparative sales number for a period of at least three months. The more information you use, the more accurate your projections will be. Say you've seen a 4% average comparative sales percentage over the past 3 months, and in the previous year sold \$100 of that item. To determine your projected sales, use the following equation: $\$100 \times 1.04 = \104 in projected sales.
- **Open to buy** is the amount you can healthily budget for spending on new products. (Sales projections help determine this number.) Simply multiply the projected sales—let's use \$104 from above—by the amount you want to spend. With keystone at 50%, I usually want to spend a little less than that, so I use 48%; $\$104 \times .48 = \49.92 is the "open to buy." You can always spend less—I don't generally recommend spending more unless you have a clear plan to get your sales and purchases back in order.

Make a Plan for the Year

For those who manage inventory, planning is at the root of all we do. What are we planning for? Sales—of the right product, in historically supported quantities that hopefully avoid out of stocks (in other words, missed sales).

Freshy Ahmadian, merchandising and inventory director at Churchmouse Yarns & Teas on Bainbridge Island, Washington, works with a complex inventory system. She finds that documentation and keeping great records support her in making the best decisions and placing well-informed orders. Fancy Tiger Crafts uses an ordering calendar for their day-to-day product supply needs. More frequent orders are scheduled for high-demand items and up to three months are scheduled between orders for slow-moving items. Doing so helps ensure that products don't slip through the cracks for ordering and also does a great deal to prevent out of stocks.

So many successful yarn shop owners do this work intuitively. It is worth taking the time to identify your own best practices, celebrate them and perhaps share them with the broader community.

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

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Take It for a Spin

Spinning is hot, and many spinners are looking to shop at their local yarn stores. Are you ready?

BY JILLIAN MORENO

The 2016 State of Specialty Needle Arts Spinner Survey shows that 67 percent of spinners who bought fiber at knitting stores did it to support their local shops.

Spinners are eager to shop locally, and more and more yarn companies are offering spinning fiber. Have you considered adding spinning to your shop mix?

Dave Van Stralen of Louet North America has seen the rise of spinning over the past five or so years. "Because of programs like TNNA's Spinzilla, spinning fiber has been the number one thing my customers ask for besides yarn."

"The availability of spinning fiber in yarn shops has been growing, and now 25 to 30 percent of my yarn customers buy fiber too," says Stephanie Siman, owner of Frabjous Fibers. And it's not just fiber that is selling at yarn shops—equipment sales have steadily grown too.

Judy Pagels, sales manager of Schacht Spindle Company, has seen a rise in knitting stores carrying spinning wheels. "There's been a steady increase over the past three years and [a noticeable] uptick in 2016." Schacht recently started carrying spinning and weaving books as well, "especially beginning books—our best-sellers are Maggie Casey's *Start Spinning* and Beth Smith's *How to Spin*," Pagels adds.

For Rachel Maurer, owner and self-professed "chief enabler" at Woolyn, a brand-new yarn shop in Brooklyn, carrying fiber was a no-brainer: "I'm a spinner. But beyond that, I felt it would be a sound financial investment. There weren't any shops in New York City that were supporting spinners and other crafters who use fiber in any sort of major way. I wanted it to be a focus at the store. You can create a real visual impact with fiber, which calls for less of a financial commitment than yarn does. Often, people who are very passionate about crafts like knitting and crochet get itchy to try something new, and making yarn is a natural thing for them to be curious about. Having that opportunity for them right here helps make a sale, even when they swear their yarn stashes are too big."

Successful, established shops are jumping on the bandwagon as well. Craig Rosenfeld, owner of Loop in Philadelphia, recently added spinning supplies to his mix. "People have asked about spinning over the years, but lately we've been getting more and more requests. We began

looking into what we'd need to stock, which, as it turns out, isn't much, and most importantly, we found a few experienced spinners who are excited to teach here."

Start Small

It doesn't take a lot of space or much fiber to get someone started in spinning. As an owner, you don't have to be a spinner or carry spinning wheels. For about \$500, you can start a spinning section with an array of beautiful fiber. Fiber is what spinners shop for the most. According to the recent TNNA survey, 24 was the average number of skeins of yarn a spinner made in 2015.

"Even shop owners who aren't spinners themselves seem to feel more comfortable stocking

companies for use in class." He's very happy with the response. "Last fall, we hosted a monthly spin-in as a gathering for the community."

Gauge Response

Learn about your customers' interest in spinning by questioning every person at checkout and by stocking some fiber from one of your existing yarn companies. Ask about spinning on social media and in your newsletter. You might be surprised how many of your current customers are already spinners. If spinning catches on, it's easy to add drop spindles or even wheels and spinning classes to your offerings. When you do add equipment to your mix, it's important to have a spinner on staff or on call. You don't have to

How to Attract Spinners to Your Shop

Get the word out that you have gorgeous fiber in your shop, and spinners will come.

- **Create a spinning spot.** Put all your spinning fiber and tools in one spot. It creates a festive atmosphere, and spinners will know exactly where to go to see it all.
- **Go local.** Contact local and area guilds to let them know you stock fiber.
- **Keep it fresh.** Make sure your fiber displays get some love. Try different fibers or blends, find local fiber suppliers and dyers, and try natural-colored wool from different breeds. Spinners who come in regularly want variety, and spinners respond well to a range of colors, dyeing styles, fibers and blends.
- **Wool is king.** Wool is the most popular fiber for spinners to spin. Even in the summer, spinners spin wool.
- **Host a spinning gathering.** Spinners like to hang out. Host a spin-in weekly or monthly. If your shop doesn't have room for several wheels, have a spindle spin-in.
- **Ask the spinners.** Ask the spinners in your shop what they want—often they have the best ideas for attracting and keeping spinning customers.

fiber than they did just a few years ago," Stephanie Siman says. "The opinion used to be that if you didn't stock drop spindles and wheels, you wouldn't sell fiber. However, this theory has been found to be false—you don't need to be a full-fledged spinning shop to sell spinning fibers."

Dave Van Stralen agrees: "I supply shops that are very successful selling fiber only. They spent less than \$1,000 to get started. Stocking a variety of fibers, both dyed and natural, is key. Many shops like to carry local dyers too."

Craig Rosenfeld devotes less than 10 percent of his shop space to spinning: "We brought in four kinds of fiber and wheels from two different

have a full-time spinner in house every day, but it's excellent customer service for spinners to know that they can come in to ask questions or get help.

According to the recent TNNA survey, 51 percent of spinners also knit. By welcoming spinners to your store, you will sell spinning supplies, but you may actually sell more yarn as well.

Jillian Moreno is the author of *Yarnitecture: A Knitter's Guide to Spinning* (Storey Publishing). She is the editor of Knittyspin, writes regularly for *PLY* and *Spin Off* magazines, teaches all over and lives in a house filled with handspun samples in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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Many Happy Returns

A guide to business deductions to make your taxes less daunting. BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Once the Champagne bottles and noisemakers are put away, many business owners turn their attention to taxes.

The federal tax code allows business owners to deduct a wide range of expenses, reducing the amount of taxable income attributable to your business. Less taxable income means a smaller tax bill. (Caveat: Consult your tax professional about any questions or concerns you may have as you prep your tax returns.)

Start with the Basics

Make sure you become familiar with business-related deductions.

• **Start-up costs.** If your business is relatively new, begin with the expenses you incurred to get your business started—for example, fees to a real estate agent, attorney fees for negotiating a lease and forming a corporate entity, fees paid to contractors to renovate your shop or the cost of fixtures, shelves, signs and POS terminals. These

equipment in year one as a Section 179 deduction. Consider all the equipment that you purchased during the last business year that may qualify for an equipment deduction: an office computer, a tablet used with a card reader or a traditional cash register, a point-of-sale system, trade fixtures like shelving and display racks, furniture for customers to sit on, a natural-daylight lamp for the shop, even ball winders.

• **Auto expenses.** If you have a car, van or truck that you use for the business, tax regulations allow you to deduct related expenses in one of two ways: You can deduct a fixed amount for each mile you drive for business; the IRS sets a specific rate (54 cents per mile in 2016). You can also deduct parking and toll expenses with the standard mileage deduction. Or, you can use the actual expense method to calculate the deduction; this method allows you to deduct the price of the vehicle in installments over a period of years, or deduct the annual lease payments each tax year. With this method, you may also deduct the cost of gas, repairs, maintenance,

painter to freshen up the shop? A website developer to create or update a website? These fees are business expenses, too.

Do you purchase meals or cover a hotel room for a visiting teacher? Provide refreshments for a knitting circle or other shop events? Buy a colleague a drink so you can discuss business? Meals and entertainment costs qualify as deductible business expenses if you are discussing business issues; the IRS currently limits those deductions to 50 percent of the actual cost.

When you travel to a fiber festival for business purposes, or attend a business conference, your travel expenses—transportation, meals, hotel room and the like—qualify as business expenses; again, they are subject to the IRS-mandated 50 percent cap.

If you use credit cards or a bank line of credit to purchase business assets or supplies, or to pay an operating expense, the interest and fees you pay to the lender are deductible. Even a bad debt can qualify as a deductible business expense. If you order inventory from a vendor who never delivers and you can't get a refund, you can deduct the loss as a business expense. If a customer pays with a bad check and doesn't make good for the purchase, you can deduct the loss as a business expense. But remember that only the loss of tangible goods, not services, can be deducted, so make sure all your class participants pay in cash up front.

For the Record

If you get audited, you'll need to provide solid documentation for as many of your deductions as possible. Exactly how you keep your receipts and records is up to you, but make sure you establish some sort of record-keeping system.

Start by retaining receipts. Make notes on the back of receipts and other documents to remind yourself who you were with and the business-related topics you discussed. Many apps are available to help annotate and organize receipts; some are designed to help you keep track of mileage used for business. And check your existing software: You may already own software that will tally expenses for you, like QuickBooks. Avoid using cash for business-related transactions; if you do, keep careful notes of exactly how much you spent, where and why.

start-up costs cannot be deducted in one lump sum in year one, however; currently, the IRS allows you to deduct a total of \$5,000 in start-up expenses the first year, and then amortize the rest over a 15-year period.

• **Equipment costs.** When you buy equipment (rather than inventory or supplies) for your business, you have several options, and things can get quite complicated. You can deduct the cost over a period of years based on an IRS-approved depreciation schedule, or you can deduct the full cost of the equipment in the year you purchased it (a so-called Section 179 deduction). If you've leased the equipment, you can either deduct the lease payments as an annual expense or deduct the full value of the

equipment in year one as a Section 179 deduction. Consider all the equipment that you purchased during the last business year that may qualify for an equipment deduction: an office computer, a tablet used with a card reader or a traditional cash register, a point-of-sale system, trade fixtures like shelving and display racks, furniture for customers to sit on, a natural-daylight lamp for the shop, even ball winders.

Look Beyond the Shop

Think about all the professional services your business uses. If you pay for advice from lawyers, accountants, a social media consultant or other professionals, those fees are deductible. If you hire freelance designers, technical editors or test knitters/crocheters, the fees are a deductible expense. Any supplies you give them for the projects also qualify as a deductible expense. Did you hire a

Don't Forget

Keep an eye out for the following potential deductions: The cost of advertising (print ads, online advertising, the cost of printing postcards to publicize an event); the cost of tangible goods donated as prizes in order to generate publicity and goodwill (if you are donating to a nonprofit organization, deduct the amount as a charitable donation rather than a business expense); business association dues; office supplies; funds used for petty cash; business-related magazines, videos and books; online computer services related to your business (such as a web host), as well as business-related software; postage and other shipping costs; marketing research. These expenses are easy to overlook when April 15 looms but can add up quite nicely.

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



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RETAIL PROFILE

BY DARYL BROWER

Stitch House Dorchester

LYS owners wear many hats, but Annissa Essaibi George wears more than most.

For the past 10 years she's been running the ever-welcoming Boston yarn shop Stitch House Dorchester while teaching high school half-time. She's also a mother of four, including a set of triplets. And in 2015, she won a seat on the city council, fulfilling a longtime dream to be a Boston politician. It's a lot to juggle, but Essaibi George has things under control: "People ask me how I do it all and I say, 'I don't. I have help.' I have great employees who treat the shop as their own. That's the secret to our success."

Customers who walk into Stitch House agree with Essaibi George's assessment of her staff. "Warm and welcoming," "inspirational," "knowledgeable and friendly" are just some of the compliments customers throw out when discussing them. "It's so important to pull together a good team," Essaibi George says.

Much of that current team comes from the other side of the cash register. "I have a few employees who've been here since the beginning," she says. "They were hired in what you'd call the 'professional' or 'traditional' way. But as we grew and our needs changed, we started filling openings with people from our customer base." With other duties keeping her from being in the shop full time, Essaibi George says it was essential for her to hand over some of the decision making to her employees and to give them a real stake in the shop. "They're engaged in the day-to-day operations in a way they wouldn't be if I were there all the time," she says. "They're good, dedicated people, and I think they do it better than I ever could on my own."

"A place of delight, texture and inspiration" is how one customer describes Stitch House, and it's not hyperbole. Flower boxes beckon from the street, and inside things are bright and colorful thanks to both hanks of yarn and a hot-pink wall. The selection is wide and deep. "We carry acrylics and we carry high-end hand-dyes," Essaibi George says. "I think it's important to invest a lot in inventory to make sure there's something for everyone." Buttons, books and other knitting essentials round out the selection, along with a lineup of sewing machines and a small collection of quilting fabrics.

The latter are evidence of Essaibi George's first crafting love, sewing. She finished her first project, a skirt for her Barbie doll, at the age of 6. In high school she was a national finalist in a McCall's Pattern Co. sewing contest; in college she and her roommate earned spending money by selling hand-sewn hair scrunchies. After college she started a small children's-wear line, designing and sewing special-occasion pieces for upscale shops. Knitting came later, when she found the portability of the projects to be more in line with her busy schedule.

The foray into yarn shop ownership came in 2007 when her husband, Doug, went looking for a renter for a property he owned in Dorchester, where the family lives and where they both grew up. "We were talking about the type of shop we'd like to see. I half-jokingly suggested we open a knitting and sewing shop," Essaibi George recalls. That joke turned into a full-fledged business plan. "We went in with the idea that this was going to be a viable business, not a hobby," she says. She wasn't completely new to retail, having worked at Dorchester's local fabric shop in high school and college. Wanting to complement rather than compete with that store, she decided a yarn shop would be a better addition to the neighborhood. Space constraints also factored into her decision. "My shop is too small to sell all the fabric I'd want to," she says. So yarn became the focus of the shop, augmented by a small line of quilting fabrics.

Most of Stitch House's clients are local (proximity to the Red Line, one of Boston's biggest transit lines, brings tourists as well), and a good many of them learned to knit at the shop. "I wanted our store to shape their perception of what it means to be a crafter," she says of those newbie knitters and quilters. "So we make sure the experience of walking in here is modern and fun. It's bright and colorful and open—and above all, friendly."

And while the wide selection of yarn certainly helps bring in customers, the real draw is the sense of community that's developed here. Events abound, from men's knitting nights to movie night. Classes are extensive, covering everything from basic blocking and simple stitches to creating a custom sweater. Sewing and quilting courses are on offer as well. "We bring in guests [Steven Be is next up on the roster], have special workshops, and have

some great sale events," Essaibi George says. Those enrolled in a class can join in on lunchtime knit sessions on Mondays, where the shop's knowledgeable staff doles out help and advice on whatever project customers have in progress. A blog and weekly newsletter keep customers connected to what's going on in the shop—new yarns, new classes, special events—with little glimpses into Essaibi George's personal life as well. "I think it makes the whole experience more personal," she says. "Customers want to know who they are buying from."

A lifetime love of Boston politics drew Essaibi George to run for city council in 2013. She lost, but two years later she ran again and won, unseating an 18-year incumbent. One of her supporters was a competing yarn shop. "She sent out an email blast to her customers encouraging them to vote for me," she says. "I think that's symbolic of our industry: We all have a willingness to support each other because we know it's essential for the craft to continue to grow." Ten months into her term, she's thrilled that she now has a voice in helping both small businesses and the educational system, even if it's meant having even less time to spend at the shop stitching with customers. Still, she's managed to keep knitting in the loop. On one of her first days in office, a city employee asked her to start a knitting group. "So now we have a knitting circle at City Hall," she says. "It's awesome."



Stitch House Dorchester

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Years in business: 10

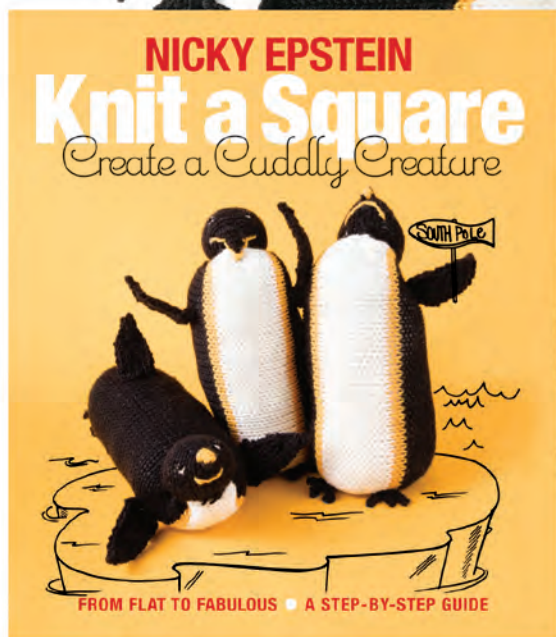
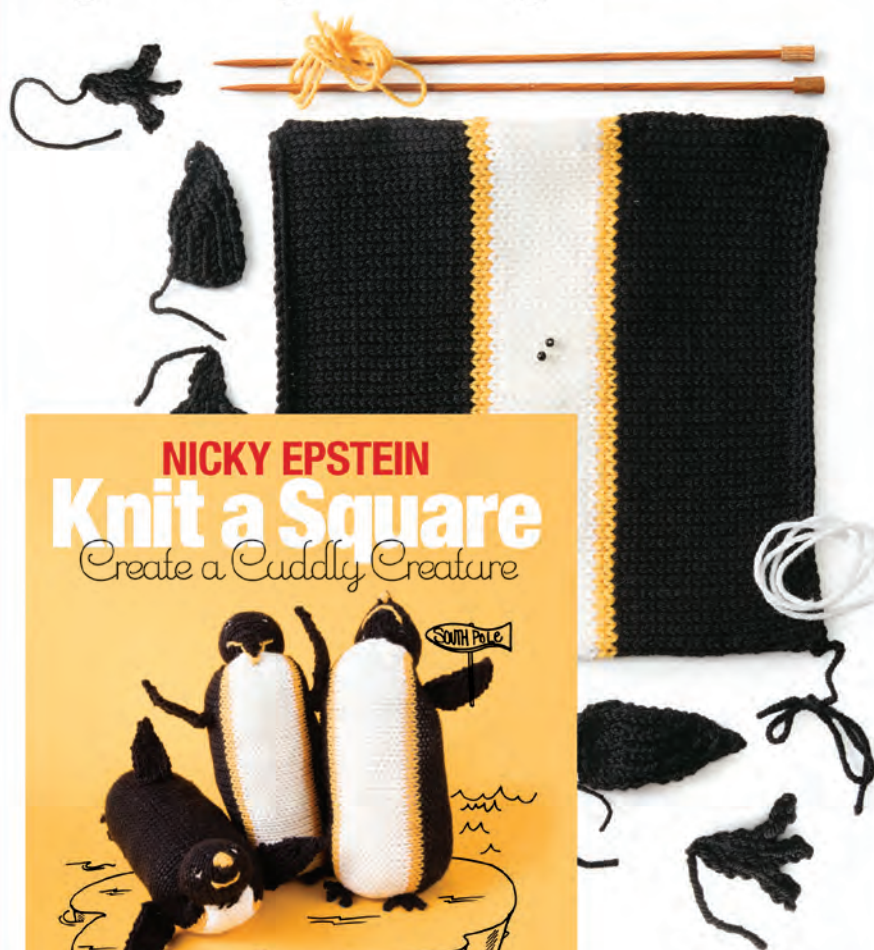
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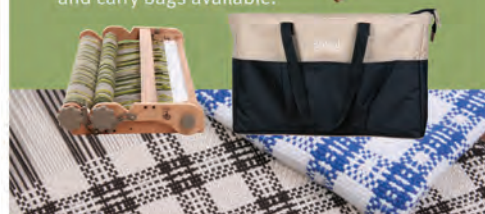
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COMPANY PROFILE

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

Louet

Every store has to have diversity. You can't expect stores to buy everything from you, but for stores that are starting out... One of the things that I learned years ago is that if you can reduce the number of suppliers you're working with, that's less administration for you as a store owner—and efficiency and savings as a result," says Dave Van Stralen of Louet North America. "So diversifying our product assortment is a strategy that we're working toward."



As a purveyor of yarns, fibers, spinning and weaving tools, needles (thanks to the recent acquisition of Kollège's needle business) and assorted other products including Soak wool wash, Louet North America could very nearly be considered a one-stop shop, but Van Stralen isn't ready to accept that claim.

Louet North America has been in the Van Stralen family since 1989; it was first operated by Van Stralen's parents, Trudy and Jan, who managed the company for a few years before buying it in 1992. What started as wholesale

distribution of Louet's spinning and weaving equipment grew to include fibers and knitting yarn. ("If you're buying spinning wheels, you're going to need fiber, and if you're buying weaving looms, you're going to need yarn," Van Stralen says.) In 1994, Trudy and Jan asked Dave to join the company, and the family

decided to further diversify, buying Euroflax and Gems. "From there, we quickly learned that to sell to the knitting crowd, you have to have patterns, so my mom started developing those," Dave Van Stralen says.

In 2008, he transitioned to company lead, fully taking over operations. "We rode her coattails for awhile," Van Stralen says of his mother, who had always been the creative heart of the company. But under his guidance, his team, which now consists of 10 employees handling everything from customer service to shipping, has adapted. "We started getting into outside pattern development and sourcing fibers in a different way," he says. "We've had to continue doing things differently."

Take the company's customer outreach. Van Stralen and his team have built a robust online presence. It also has an e-shop on its website. "I was very much a proponent in the '90s and early 2000s of making the website more interactive. We were the first company in the knitting industry to be on Shopatron [now called Kibo]. As soon as we did that, people who couldn't find product in stores were able to get it online."

He and his wife, Pam, still make an effort to spend time on the road, meeting face to face with clients and potential customers. It's a tradition that was started by his parents. "My mom and dad were on the road a lot because she was teaching hand dyeing and visiting stores and going to the shows trying to build an interest in our product," he explains. "Pam has the ability to talk to strangers and become their best friend in a short period of time. Taking advantage of her interpersonal skills, we made a conscious decision to start building relationships with stores."

Louet also tries to collaborate with store owners on events, and Van Stralen says he's seen sales increase as a result. "Being the kind of people that are fun to work with and easy to work with—that's all part of the environment we're trying to create."

Some things at Louet have stayed the same since the company's inception. The offices, for instance, are built on the Van Stralens' original farm property. "The original house is 250 years old, and we converted a 200-year-old barn into a warehouse," he says. But Van Stralen is determined to make sure Louet evolves and adapts to the current business climate. The company's location—in Prescott, Ontario, about halfway between Toronto and Montreal, right on the Canada-U.S. border—means he can an-



Address: 3425 Hands Rd., Prescott, Ontario, Canada K0E 1T0

Employees: 10

Fun fact: Originally from Holland, Trudy Van Stralen said that she knit in Dutch, so she found it a challenge to write patterns for a North American audience, because information would get lost in translation. Because Trudy was the company's sole designer, she ended up working with a local knitter for the pattern writing.

swer the needs of both countries' markets and the fluctuations in the dollar. It's also an ideal geographic spot from which to distribute product. Louet has distribution agreements with Lavishea, Gaywool Dyes, Purl & Loop and Kollège, whose needles it now also manufactures.

"The Kollège needle acquisition has been a big step forward in our growth plans," Van Stralen says. "Of course, it's a natural fit, since we're already serving the exact same customer base. It's a high-quality product that fits with our product selections, and Kollège had a lot of product development in the works that hadn't really gotten to market—for example, their interchangeable sets. We launched those last October."

Next year also sees the launch of a special collection of products and the arrival of a special person. "We're launching a needle-of-the-month club for 2017," says Van Stralen. "It will be a different color every month, in birthstone colors, and we'll ship out one circular needle per month, so by the end of the year you'll have a full set." Louet will also include a special-edition case to accompany the needles. The company is also reintroducing Kollège's Sonix round needles at a low price point, "\$10 for a set of circulars," Van Stralen says. They will be fully available this year.

And he's especially excited about welcoming Stacey Trock of FreshStitches on board as Louet's new marketing and creative director. "Stacey is a young, energetic industry professional whose skills are in marketing, along with knitting, crochet and pattern development," says Van Stralen. "This is really the first time that we've looked at someone for that role other than my mom [who died in 2015]. We've managed to find our way through from then 'til now, but it's been on my radar to find someone who has a similar vision and believes in our products. We're very excited."



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very day, Pattie Tereskun, the administrative assistant at Plymouth Yarn Co., fields emails and calls from knitting groups, charities, yarn crawls, local yarn shops, churches, schools and individual knitters—all asking for free stuff. “It’s a never-ending process,” she says. “We get requests multiple times a day, all day long.”

Danielle Romanetti, owner of Fibre Space in Alexandria, Virginia, says she’s asked for donations at least once a week.

Hidden River Yarns owner Lisa Johnson

says that because of their location in Philadelphia’s Manayunk neighborhood, near a number of universities, she gets requests “all the time. A plethora of charities are always asking.”

“It’s insane,” observes Kate Gagnon Osborn, co-owner of Kelbourne Woolens, of the volume of requests. “Did someone give a TED Talk about asking for [free] stuff?”

With fundraising becoming a fact of life in public schools and the number of yarn crawls increasing, business owners in the yarn industry have seen an upsurge in the number of requests they’re receiving for free goods. Whether it’s designers looking for yarn support, charities in need of auction swag or yarn hops trawling for gift-basket contents, yarn shop owners and vendors regularly face the conundrum of how to address the barrage of “asks.”

As it turns out, industry insiders handle these requests in myriad ways. Cynthia Mills, owner of Blazing Needles in Salt Lake City, says that since she opened in 2008, she can’t think of a time when she’s turned down a request, though she’s been criticized for this decision, she admits. In addition to offering free beginning-knitting classes every Saturday morning, Mills and her staff put together gift baskets for auctions and knitting parties that charities can sell—complete with \$20 gift certificates for the attendees, enough to buy yarn and needles for a beginning hat project. For the knitting parties, Mills ensures the shop is staffed with enough people to help novice knitters, but she puts the onus on the organization to provide food and drink. Many of the organizations Blazing Needles supports tend to be favorite charities of the store’s longstanding customers, which allows

her to reward loyal supporters. She also believes it’s incumbent on her as a small business owner in the community to give back.

“It’s the smartest way for me to market,” says Mills, who estimates that she gives away between \$3,000 and \$5,000 a year in products and other perks. “What I do wouldn’t work for everyone. But I have a very specific attitude about how I try to live my life. It comes back to me, truly.”

The two owners of Gauge Yarn in Austin, Texas, also make it a point to say yes. On top of donating learn-to-knit kits, the store also promotes community knitting events, volunteering at a retirement center, knitting for veterans, and Knitzvah, a local knit-for-the-homeless initiative. “For sure it’s good marketing,” says co-owner Karli Capps. “Even if they buy discount yarn for [a charity event], they are out in the world knitting or crocheting, and it results in them saying, ‘You have to check this place out.’ Plus, it just feels good, and being part of your community is part of life’s puzzle.”

“Did someone give a TED talk about asking for [free] stuff?”

THE ART OF SAYING NO

Not all businesses are in a position to be so generous, of course. Bobbie Aspacher of Yarn Cravin’ in Perrysburg, Ohio, says she makes donations on a case-by-case basis. “If it’s a cause I feel passionately about, I’ll do it,” she says. “I’ve said no [to strangers] walking through the door. But if it’s a customer who’s involved in an organization or it’s to benefit something related, like a school of the arts, I’m more apt to say yes.” When she declines to support an organization, Aspacher simply explains that she’s spent her donation budget for the

month. “They are always welcome to ask again.”

But does saying no come at a cost? Kate Gagnon Osborn worries that turning down these requests may damage business relationships. “We feel bad if we aren’t able to support something. Will they think poorly of us if we don’t say yes?” she wonders. “That’s another level of worry, and something we’re aware of.”

Occasionally, the asker will demand a reason if a request is declined. “If we do say no, we’ll inevitably get a ‘but-why?’ email,” she says. “Then it becomes awkward, and that’s when I fear relationship issues might develop. The asker doesn’t know we just said yes to three requests and couldn’t say yes again. Maybe we’re tapped out.”

Plymouth’s Pattie Tereskun says that when she turns down a request, she tries to offer alternatives. “I suggest they contact churches. A lot of churches acquire yarn when someone

(continued on page 44)

HOW TO SAY NO

Danielle Romanetti of Fibre Space in Alexandria, Virginia, spent years in nonprofit fundraising before opening her yarn shop seven years ago. In her experience, people *will* take no for an answer, especially if you give them an alternative. Here are a few ideas on what to offer besides fresh-off-the-shelves inventory:

- **Coupons and branded swag.** Know a school group that wants to teach kids to knit? In the past, Romanetti has offered groups 10-percent-off coupons and branded totes. This gets parents and kids through the door—and hopefully everyone learns to knit.
- **Sample yarn.** Do you have a stash of samples that reps have dropped off? These brand-new skeins are au courant and can be combined with a store pattern for a sweet giveaway.
- **Gift certificates and gift cards.** Consider offering gift

certificates and gift cards, especially if the requesting organization might help you reach knitters or train new ones.

- **Retired yarn and knitting needles.** Is there a church group or guild in your area knitting and crocheting for economically challenged moms, senior citizens, disaster relief or homeless individuals? Equip them with discontinued yarn and leftover needles you’ve stashed.
- **Knitting parties.** For the cost of a few gift certificates and someone to staff the shop (and help newbie knitters or crocheters), you can host a ladies’ or gents’ night out. Cynthia Mills of Blazing Needles in Salt Lake City often sweetens the deal by having a trunk show on hand to tempt the more experienced attendees.
- **Free classes.** Offer a small discount or free learn-to-knit or -crochet classes. Who doesn’t want to live in a world with more stitchers?

passes away. The same with yarn shops."

Because she's a one-person operation, Lisa Johnson "says no all the time. People are usually very understanding. Sometimes the number of people walking through the door [asking for free stuff] exceeds the number of customers. You're here to make a living."

Earlier this year, Osborn posted a message on Facebook asking other wholesalers and retailers to weigh in on the issue. Her query produced a flurry of responses from designers and yarn companies agreeing that there's a whole lot of asking going on. In that conversation thread, Osborn wrote, "I'm definitely not trying to say that asking is always bad, just that there needs to be a little more understanding that the request is most likely not the only one we've received that day, and for sure is one of the MANY we've received that month."

MAKING THE ASK

Part of the problem for Osborn is how people make requests. In many instances, she says, Kelbourne Woolens receives BCC'd emails that have clearly been sent to numerous vendors. But if a shop emails Kelbourne Woolens directly with a specific need, that's the kind of solicitation that catches the company's attention, especially if it's a shop with which they have a relationship or is in a territory where there is strong representation of their products. "They will get a response," Osborn explains. "We have a monthly budget and do provide support as much as we can."

Terri McGill of The Rabbit Hutch in Englewood, Ohio, works both sides of the equation. Not only does she answer requests for donations as a yarn shop owner; she must also make requests as the owner of the I-75 Yarn Crawl, which, at thirty-nine shops, is the largest in the country, stretching from Clawson, Michigan, to Berea, Kentucky. McGill's approach in requesting yarn crawl prizes and other incentives is to first make a phone call to a vendor's marketing department. After she makes an initial connection, she follows up immediately with a prepared email detailing important aspects of the event, including the number of locations participating, number of passports they hope to sell, a list of shops, and the ways in which they plan to promote the event.

"The email gives the person something to show their boss," McGill explains. "You'll get better giveaways by making that call first, because it puts a voice to the person who's doing the requesting." So far, McGill's strategy has paid off; she has yet to be turned down in her pursuit of swag for the north-south yarn hop. Armed with a goal of selling 1,000 passports for the event, she even convinced the yarn companies Cascade and Berroco to help support an I-75 billboard near Moraine, Ohio, with company logo placement.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

One of the biggest barriers to giving is the question: Do fibery handouts fuel business? The answer is hard to know. Lisa Johnson estimates that she's donated about 60 gift certificates that haven't been redeemed. "Of all the certificates I've given, only one or two have been cashed in. The fact that so many are not used makes it difficult for me to track. You're not allowed to claim it as a deduction until it's used."

Kate Gagnon Osborn agrees that there's no way to track the good vibes generated by this type of investment, especially when yarn shops and yarn crawl organizers don't report any oohs and aahs from customers receiving their goodies. "There's no way of knowing what happens to this stuff. It would be nice to get a photo that shows the prize basket, and



the winner holding it. At least that's something we can use on social media."

Cynthia Mills, however, says she hears from customers who have seen Blazing Needles's gift baskets at auctions all over Salt Lake City, events that expose the shop to the city's movers and shakers. "This is the heart and soul of why I opened the store," she explains. "I wanted to make a knitting community. To me, community means caring about the organizations my customers care about. That helps to keep the city vibrant and alive."

The Old Town Boutique District in Alexandria, Virginia, where Fibre Space makes its home, is taking a new approach to the request onslaught by implementing a new program it hopes will be a win-win. Using a software platform called Causeware, the district's merchant group has instituted

a Shop for Good program wherein every Wednesday, each store in the district donates 20 percent of the day's sales to a charity supported by it or a customer. The software tracks and distributes the funds. Fibre Space's default charity is Project Knitwell, a Washington, D.C.-area organization that teaches people facing stressful situations to knit. "We wanted to change this culture of asking, asking, asking. Instead, what if schools making a request asked the parents to shop in our district, knowing 20 percent will go back as a cash donation?" says Danielle Romanetti. "We wanted to shift the freebie ask to this concept. We get more feet in the door, and the charity gets cash, which is better anyway."

THE WHOLESALE ASK

Like yarn shops, wholesalers consider the marketing perks associated with making a contribution. At Plymouth Yarn, all charitable requests are answered, but yarn shops receive top priority when it comes to freebies. "Whether the [freebie] requests are for an anniversary, a shop hop or a special sale, our loyalty is to yarn shops. They are our direct customers," Pattie Tereskun says.

When Tereskun gets requests from schools and scout groups, she refers them to TNNA's Needlearts Mentoring Program, which supplies needlecraft kits to youth organizations and is a regular recipient of Plymouth's largesse. Other organizations get a form email reading, "Although we cannot donate to all who ask, we do our best to donate to as many as possible. If we can send to your charity this time, please understand that

we can only send one donation per calendar year and we may not be able to send to you next year." She also requires the asker to contact a Plymouth Yarn stockist willing to accept a shipment. This helps drive people into yarn shops and also makes it possible for Plymouth to combine these charitable gifts with LYS orders, if they coincide.

Recently Tereskun tracked the number of free kits she put together in response to requests over the course of two months. She estimates the wholesale value at upwards of \$15,000, not including shipping, which Plymouth also covers. "We have a budget," she says. "And we exceed it every year. I would hope that the shops carrying Plymouth yarn are really helping us and supporting us. It's a loyalty issue, and I hope it affects us sales-wise."

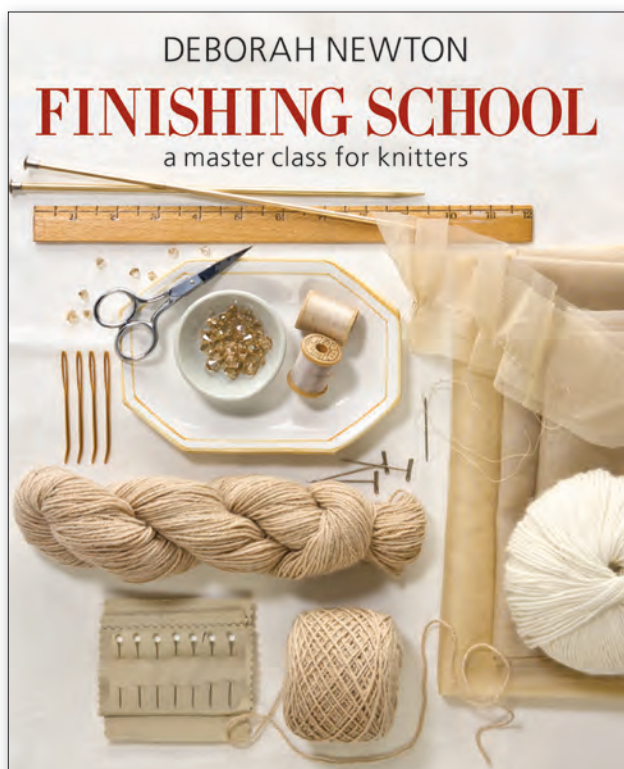
To give or not to give? The benefits are vague except for this: Sitting outside Austin's Blanton Museum on Worldwide Knit-in-Public Day, Gauge Yarn staff taught people to knit and crochet, handing out kits and needles, spreading the love of a craft that may or may not bring customers back to their store or those brands but definitely spreads joy.

"We want the world to be a better place," Capps says. "And we want to get people knitting."

"You'll get better
giveaways by making
a phone call first,
because it puts a voice
to the person who's
requesting."

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Luring A Younger Audience

By Nora Abouteif



How to engage Millennials in the age of Social Media.

the formerly tried-and-true rules of commerce. How should the craft industry engage with these customers?

"To get to the top and stay on top, you must learn how Millennials communicate, how they use the Internet and social media," says Paivi Kankaro, project manager for the social sharing craft site Kollabora, which includes DIY workshops called CraftJam. Kankaro has been working in the digital world for the past 10 years and has seen the ways social media has changed the traditional way of doing business. As the markets have changed, companies have had to shift from traditional top-down approaches to more democratic ones in order to stay competitive. She says that companies should no longer focus on simply selling their products, but instead strive to create a community and build customer loyalty for their brands: "Content marketing, native advertising, collaboration, engagement and hashtags should be an integral part of your campaign strategy."

"The Internet generation is productive: [User-generated content has exploded by almost 300 times in the past three years, and video views have reached more than four billion per day," Kankaro continues. And while many companies provide paid video content, it's the free video content that is really growing. This creates a gap, leaving manufacturers and retailers scurrying to figure out how to catch up. "It's not easy to find a foothold in this

cornucopia of content, but there are definitely ways to do it."

But before we dive into the how-tos, let's revisit a few facts: The 79 million Millennials living in the United States represent an estimated purchasing power of \$170 billion dollars per year. According to a survey of 1,600 DIYers, makers under 35 are spending more than \$1,000 a year on DIY projects. In contrast, the over-35 crowd spends roughly half that.

Millennials are definitely a desirable audience for the craft industry in particular. Conventional wisdom tells us that this generation—saddled with history's biggest student-loan debt—has given rise to makers interested in everything from craft beers to DIY home décor. So what actual steps should your company be taking to reach this new audience?

Know Your Audience. Technology comes naturally to Millennials. Through smartphones and social media apps, these digital natives are eager to document and share their every experience and opinion. This behavior carries over into consumerism as well: Millennials are obsessive about sharing information about their brand preferences through photos, videos, blog posts and reviews. For them, posting about a purchase or restaurant dish on social media is the new norm. It is therefore essential that your products be easily accessible and sharable as digital content. Create incentives for people to share your products on social media. Studies show that Millennials are about twice as likely to buy a product they've personally shared on social media.

Make your content relevant. When appealing to Millennials, you are selling not just a product but an entire lifestyle: what the brand promises, how the message of this brand makes them feel, and how they see themselves, along with the rest of society, consuming that brand. This is even

more important when it comes to social media communication. Your goal should be not just to show the different ways people can use your products but the type of culture and lifestyle those products represent, which is why your social media content should reflect the current trends and the general lifestyle of your audience. For example, Millennial makers—conscious consumers who recycle and upcycle whenever possible—tend to support companies that address their concerns about the environment and other important issues. Make your company's values visible in your content. Show that you are actively making thoughtful business decisions.

Make your visuals pop. Millennials are immersed in visual culture, and social media platforms offer constant visual inspiration and ideas on what constitutes “good design,” which sets expectations high for businesses. Your company's aesthetic and visual brand must resonate and communicate effectively with the most design-centric generation in history. Technology and educational resources make it easy to keep standards up and quality high. Ask yourself how you should frame and light your photos to best effect. What kind of backgrounds should you use? Drafting a simple style guide will help you keep your content consistent and make sure your company's photo content looks aligned. To take your social media game to the next level, make your visual branding recognizable. Customers enjoy detecting visual cues and messages. Don't be afraid to reference popular culture and current events.

Be Patient. Everyone who works in social media knows that building a successful online presence takes time: Success does not come overnight, but commitment brings results. Sure, you can spend money to boost your visibility or buy users, but what you really want is an audience that is engaging with you. If you have a genuine interest in your audience, you will educate yourself on the types of products they look for. Engage them in conversation. Follow developments in apps and know your competition. Knowledge is power.

Dare. According to surveys, Millennials are surprisingly open to brand engagement and advertising, but only if brands take the right approach. It's not just about what you say, but how you say it. Create a language that reflects your company and resonates with your audience. Make your message easy to digest and worth your audience's time. Make references to current events. Show that you live in the same time and place as your customers. Have fun and be bold. Laugh with your customers. And as silly as it may sound, use emojis. But be honest and open, more than you might be comfortable sharing. Millennial consumers are incredibly good at identifying lies and external motives. Use a language that your customers can relate to, but don't pretend to be anything you are not.

Be a storyteller. As mentioned earlier, rather than just reacting to marketing, consumers are responding to messages and how those messages make them feel. It's all about the storytelling. One of the most powerful tools of advertising is combining an idea with an emotion. Storytelling can demystify companies. To make your story effective on social media, reveal something personal or unknown about your brand or the people behind it. Connect it to a specific emotion and take your audience on an imaginary narrative journey that allows them to experience it as well. Through storytelling, you can share your values, goals and history and make your audience travel along with you. For example, what drove you to start your company in the first place? What is it about crafting that you love to share with others? Show transparency by giving behind-the-scenes insights and feature your employees, manufacturers and customers. Show the real people working behind your brand.

Engage in dialogue. No one likes a person who talks only about herself. The same goes for companies. Don't just talk about your products; engage with your audience in a broader sense. Create a genuine dialogue with your consumers. It is important for brands to be where the consumers are, but not passively—Millennials expect brands to be quick and responsive. When

making decisions, Millennials trust feedback and advice from their peers. Their judgment is based not only on reviews and comments but also on “like,” “favorite” and “share” buttons. This feedback needs to be a two-way street, as they also expect their questions and comments to be answered in real time via social media. Companies with Facebook and Twitter accounts that actively respond to customers who review their goods and services are known for having the best customer service among Millennials. Many people will take to social media when they have a bad experience with a company in hopes that the company will redeem itself. However, it is never a good idea to engage in an argument on social media. Most importantly, admit your mistakes and be authentic. If something has gone wrong, make a promise to do a better job in the future, not an excuse.

Go to your customers. If you want to build a community around your product, don't build your own platform; instead, go where your customers already spend lots of time. Roughly half of the Millennials surveyed support brands that allow them to “co-create” the products they use. Crowd-sourcing and peer production have made Millennials conscious of their ability to make brands successful and create products that suit their own needs. Use your social media channels to learn how you can do a better job of serving your customers. Social media can be an important channel for gathering vital user information—and maybe even a source for new innovations.

One of the best ways to engage with an audience is to give credit to people who use your products. By integrating content generated by the audience, customers can also tell their stories. Recognizing your customers' work on social media encourages people to share their experiences

and projects even more. You can also build entire campaigns around user-generated content, which allows businesses to delegate some of the brand-building responsibilities. Studies show that Millennial consumers are more interested, and to some extent find it more trustworthy, to hear the views of their peers than to read cleverly written sales messages.

Interestingly, celebrity culture doesn't appeal to them quite as much: Only 19 percent of Millennials want brands to partner with a celebrity or public figure they admire. With the exposure social media offers, this generation doesn't want to mimic the stars anymore; they want to be the stars themselves. YouTube and Instagram are creating new kinds of celebrities, who have more influence and followers than Hollywood types do. Working with these influencers might be more beneficial for your company than hiring a celebrity.

Meet IRL. Meeting your customers not only helps you know them better but also ties them closer to your brand. Ironically, social media has made it so much easier to arrange spontaneous meet-and-greets with your fans and customers thanks to much improved location-sharing services. Host surprise giveaways and flash mobs on the street, and you'll be sure to have some extra social media buzz around your brand. Plus, you might draw in customers who didn't know you existed. Have your hashtags and social media accounts highly visible for easy tagging.

And lastly, remember to breathe! “Don't feel as if you have to be everywhere all the time,” says Kankaro. “Instead, pick the medium that makes sense to your company and do it well. There's nothing more sad than an unused Twitter account or an Instagram feed with nothing new to show. You don't have to get on board with every latest social media fad, but don't overlook them either.” To get started, choose the mediums that make the most sense to your company and can be pushed the furthest to fulfill your brand strategy. Make sure you have resources enough to commit to the workload, since managing social media is legitimate work, not just an extra hustle on the side. Experiment on your way to finding your voice, and use the audience's reactions as a reassurance that you are on the right path.

Nora Abousteit is the founder of Kollabora.

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NOTHING BUT BLUE SKIES



From humble beginnings great companies grow. YMN's Erin Slonaker sat down with Blue Sky Fibers' **Linda Niemeyer** to hear about her journey from raising alpacas to dominating the yarn business.

YMN: Your company started out as Blue Sky Alpacas. Tell me, how did you end up the owner of a herd of alpacas?

LN: I happened to catch a documentary about camelids and I was really taken with the alpacas. It must have been their big, soulful eyes. Anyway, I started researching them. Did you know they've been domesticated by humans for about 5,000 years? After visiting a few farms, I bought one whose name was Elderberry. Turns out she was pregnant. So one alpaca quickly became two.

YMN: Were you a knitter or spinner before you got your alpacas?

LN: I didn't have any experience, so my growing herd of alpacas took me on a great adventure. I've traveled to beautiful places to see how this all works. I've dabbled in spinning, knitting, weaving, sculpting and felting fiber. I learned to hand-shear, too. Have you ever seen a half-shorn alpaca? Hilarious.

YMN: When did you start to market your alpaca yarn?

LN: First I accumulated fiber. My mother took to

spinning, and I designed a cool little tag with the alpaca's name and took the hanks to a local yarn shop—Sheepy Yarn Shop in White Bear Lake, Minnesota. The owner, Marge, who is still there, bought some, and I was officially in business. As it turns out, her granddaughter Bobbi, now all grown up, is one of our regular pattern designers.

YMN: Where do you source your yarn now?

LN: We source mostly from South America—Peru in particular. We develop our own yarns. We don't buy off the shelf. It's a long process, one that's important to creating the high value our yarns reflect.

YMN: How do you choose the colors for each yarn line?

LN: A lot of it's organic; a lot of it depends on what the yarn makeup is and how it takes dye. Some colors look great with sheen, but in a different fiber you'd say, "Oh my, what happened?" It's nice to try to fill out the color wheel and balance out your entire line. I love orange in all shades, but not everyone likes orange, so my staff have to hold me back, remind me to remember purple.

YMN: You recently rebranded as Blue Sky Fibers. What brought about the name change?

LN: The simple fact is that we realized knitters can't exist on alpaca alone. To satisfy their creative demands and keep them inspired, we started offering a full range of natural fibers. So the word "fibers" better reflects what we're all about.

YMN: What led to the creation of Spud & Chloe?

LN: We wanted to offer more kid-centric, family-friendly—meaning, machine-washable—natural-fiber yarns.

YMN: You built this company from the ground up. What types of challenges have you faced, and how do you deal with them?

LN: Maybe because I'm not in a traditional corporate environment or because I've forged my own

// "BLUE SKY" WAS MY HUSBAND'S IDEA; I LIKED ITS HAPPY CONNOTATION. //

path, I know that "no" doesn't have to mean no. It just means "ask in a different way." I used to do everything myself—putting together shipments in my living room—and over the past 15 years, I've brought in people with

diverse skill sets who can not only do things better than I can, but can take some of the day-to-day details off my plate. I can continue to be the visionary, which is what I absolutely love—the experience of meeting new people, networking, traveling, spending time outdoors, and caring for my alpacas.

YMN: How did your business sense develop?

LN: I don't know if I had an innate business sense or if I started my own business because I didn't like "regular" business. By starting my own business, I could make my life into what I wanted it to be. I have learned from everything and everybody, including my alpacas. I want to write a book: *Seven Things I've Learned From My Alpacas!* I continue to learn from people in other industries, books, conferences, an international businesswomen's group—so many others have informed my journey.

YMN: Any specific books you'd recommend?

LN: My best recommendation is *The E-Myth Revisited* by Michael E. Gerber. It's short and sweet, with case studies to help small businesses. The bottom line is learning to let go of your personal ties to what you produce. Everybody who owns a yarn store should read this. And anyone who says he doesn't have enough money should read Deepak Chopra's *Creating Affluence*. Both inspired me to move forward.

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

LN: The Internet came along and changed everything, as it did for almost every business and industry. While it has increased competition, it's been a good thing overall. It's created a world community.

YMN: Any predictions for the future of the industry?

LN: Fortunately, in a world of high-tech and screen time, escaping to knitting and the handmade will continue to rise.



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