

YARN

MARKET NEWS

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

How video is
ensnaring next-
gen buyers

BY THE NUMBERS

The best ways
to make new
needleworkers

MAKE YOURSELF SCARCE

The psychology
behind limited
stock

MAY 2017



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SWEET SUCCESS



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Rust Gradient



Denim Gradient



Grey Gradient

Viking Poncho - Brown Gradient

Koigu Magazine 8

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Survival



Last issue, we ran a feature article about Millennials as a shopping demographic. They are, of course, the newest crop of potential knitters that store owners should be focused on. But more than that, they are emblematic of a major shift in the way consumers behave, no matter their generation. We're still firmly entrenched in the Age of the Consumer. How can a small business navigate that road?

Our two feature articles in this issue tackle this question. In "Never Enough Needleworkers" (page 44), Leslie Petrovski explores the effort it takes to cultivate the next generation of makers, because after all, if we cannot successfully sow new knitters, our garden (to take this metaphor very far) will die. And as much as it's the more experienced, savvy knitter who typically qualifies for SABLE status (Stash Acquisition Beyond Life Expectancy), how can you make new devoted shoppers if you aren't teaching the basics?

In our second feature, "Internet Interactions" (page 42), Mary McGurn, herself a former shop owner, distills the data about social media: who uses it, what's hot this year and what we can look forward to in the future. I'll give you a hint: it's all about video. Read for yourself and decide how you will incorporate this into your store's online presence. We'll be exploring the nitty-gritty of social media with Mary in future issues.

Staying viable in this difficult economy is of paramount importance to you as store owners and to *Yarn Market News* as a resource for you. Please, as always, write to me at erin@yarnmarketnews.com with any suggestions for articles, concerns you are having about the industry, and more. I am always eager to hear from you.



on the cover

Our Yarn Forward (page 16) actually inspired this confectionary cover. How could we resist the picture-perfect dyeing of Freia Fine Handpaints, whose color-shifting skeins remind us of lollipops? www.freiafibers.com

Photograph by Marcus Tullis

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



FOLLOW
YARN MARKET NEWS
ON FACEBOOK

THE FIBRE CO.

EST. 2003

Arranmore Light



Distributed in N. America by Kelbourne Woolens
KelbourneWoolens.com/yarns/ArranmoreLight

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Bamboo Bloom Handpaints Book 2

An ebook featuring 8 exquisite projects in
Bamboo Bloom Handpaints



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NEW & KNITTABLE

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Universal Yarn

Radiant Cotton is sure to be your new go-to spring and summer yarn. This luxurious Egyptian cotton comes in 24 glorious shades, is resistant to pilling and has the most lovely sheen. What's not to love? universalyarn.com



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The next issue of YMN will mail in late September.



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AS SEEN ON TV



▼ Calling all fans of Lorelai and Rory Gilmore—or at least their knits. Patterns and kits are now available so you can DIY your own.

The four-part Netflix miniseries *Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life* debuted in November with all the favorite tropes from the original TV series on full display: fast-paced dialogue, too much coffee and plenty of knits to help the denizens of Stars Hollow, Connecticut, ward off the New England cold.

Once the studio green-lighted the reunion, costume designer and avid knitter Brenda Maben sought out the design team of Lisa

Whiting and Lucia Blanchet (**Lisa Lucia Knits**) to help create the knits for the reunion show. The two were in the process of closing Whiting's Chicago yarn shop, Sifu Design Studio, where Maben often shopped.

That was November 2015. Sifu was set to close at the end of January 2016, with *Gilmore Girls* filming set for February. During that time, Whiting was also scheduled to have carpal tunnel surgery. "We didn't waste any time getting to work on

[the knitwear]," Whiting says.

Maben had selected items from the designers' portfolio; others emerged from the show's culture and aesthetic. The pair sold six original pieces—four sweaters and two scarves—along with all of Sifu's hat and scarf samples.

With Whiting sidelined by surgery, Blanchet knit the four sweaters herself in just four weeks. "Lisa couldn't knit," Blanchet explains. "What made it particularly hectic was all the swatching and charting and intellectual, creative design labor I was also doing at the same time."

In the end, three pieces made it onto the

show: Rory's friends Lane and Paris wore, respectively, the Jumbo Coffee sweater, a raglan pullover featuring an intarsia cup of joe, and the graphic scarf Eponymuff, so called for Lorelai's decision to name her daughter after herself. Rory sported Dots and Dashes, a two-color scarf with a geometric pattern that pays homage to the characters' "telegraphic" speech patterns.

Another Lisa Lucia creation, a pullover with a pepperoni-pizza yoke, made its way onto a different show, the second season of *Fuller House*, where it was worn by character Kimmy Gibbler.

To date, the pair has translated the three pieces featured on *Gilmore Girls* into patterns and kits. The Jumbo Coffee sweater (sized for busts 28¼" to 60¼") is available as a kit, featuring Essential Fiber's Dragonfly superwash merino. The two *Gilmore Girls* scarf kits are offered in yarns by The Fibre Co.

As for the pair's nascent design business, the exposure has been invaluable. "There are millions of patterns in the world," Whiting says. "We would have been lost at sea. This one, pinpointed experience launched us into the world's visible knitting eye. It's definitely given us a platform." www.lisaluciaknits.com

KNITTING TOGETHER

▼ Maura Pfeifer believes some things have the power to transcend race, culture, language and politics. Gather a bunch of diverse knitters in a yarn shop and everybody will pet the yarn, talk about their projects and sigh over their common love of fiber, she says. "This is our shared humanity."

Prompted by the charged discourse following last November's U.S. presidential election, Pfeifer wanted to create a way for people who share a common interest to break out of their regular social bubbles. "I see such divisiveness in our country," she says. "But if you can get people together around a common interest, suddenly the conversation becomes: What's on your needles? Who's it for? Where did you get the yarn?"

Pfeifer, a passionate knitter who works with families hosting Chinese students in the United States, reached out through her network of friends, knitters and associates to contact leaders in diverse communities in the Boston area, ranging from the Hungarian society to the Brazilian community. Despite snow the night before, some 160 knitters attended Pfeifer's four-hour event—dubbed **Knit 200 Together** and held at Cary Memorial Library in Lexington in February—taking part in ice-breakers, learn-to-knit opportunities, a double-knitting class and a problem-solving clinic. Door prizes were donated by the yarn shop WEBS, and Lion Brand Yarn Co. contributed free knitting kits.

Pfeifer hopes this inaugural Knit 200 Together gathering will spark

others around the country and even around the world to host a K200Tog in their own area. The next step, she says, is to complete a leader's guide and start working with organizers in other communities. "I want this to be an ongoing endeavor," she explains. "It's about fostering a sense of neighborhood and community, which our generation seems to have lost." www.knit200together.com



ANIMAL CORNER

HAIR OF THE DOG

Is dog hair the new angora? Listening to Knit Your Dog's **Jeanne Sanke** extol the virtues of Samoyed, Chow Chow and Golden Retriever yarn will have you believing it is. After all, why shouldn't Rover be your best friend *and* your source of great fiber? "Better to have yarn from a dog you know," Sanke quips, "than a sheep you never met."

A lifelong pet owner and knitter, Sanke had amassed a large collection of hair from Buster, her late and much-loved Chow Chow, but it wasn't until she stumbled on some handspun yarn in New Mexico that her long search for a canine-fiber spinner ended. When spinner Linda Swenson introduced her to a Chow Chow yarn sample, "My head just about exploded," Sanke says. "It was the softest DK-weight wool."

Buster's fur eventually yielded enough yarn for

Sanke to knit a lush turtleneck sweater. Extremely warm and lavishly haloed, the sweater garnered mixed reactions whenever Sanke wore it. "I'd wear the sweater to different events and the response was always overwhelming," she says. "Some thought it was weird. But most were fascinated by it."

Looking to change careers, Sanke took the suggestion of a friend and in 2014 started **Knit Your Dog**, a company that provides custom spinning and knitting services for people who want their dog's hair transformed into yarn or finished goods. Sanke is quick to point out that she is not the first to offer pooch-fiber preparation, but with stories appearing on WGN TV, Hack My Life, Treehugger.com and Daily Mail.com, requests have been pouring in from people with giant bags full of fur from all over the world.

Not all dog hair, however, can go from woof to

wool. Hair must be brushed or combed out to be spinnable. If it's been cut, clipped or removed with a Furminator tool, it can't be spun. The best fibers come from the undercoats of canines such as Chow Chows, Samoyeds, Newfoundlands, Great Pyrenees, St. Bernards and other double-coated breeds. Fibers from breeds with shorter coats—German Shepherds, Huskies, Akitas and the like—can be spun if blended with wool, silk or other fiber. Currently, lead times are three to four weeks for the yarn samples, which are offered free of charge because of the fiber variability among breeds.

As for those who are disturbed by the prospect of wearing Fifi as a cowl or cardigan, Sanke has this to say: "It smells no more like dog than your merino sweater smells like sheep or your cashmere sweater smells like goat." www.knityourdog.com



ELEPHANT COZIES

Talk about extreme crochet. In a pilot project by the **Wildlife SOS Elephant Conservation and Care Center**, nomadic Kalandar women have been taught to crochet jackets for the organization's disabled and recovering jumbos. The group's 23 elephants were rescued from abusive pasts in circuses and slums. "Northern India is subject to cold winters, and this year the temperatures in the region dipped quite low," explains Wildlife SOS communications associate Arinita Sandilya. "It is important to keep our rescued elephants protected from this extreme weather, as they are weak and vulnerable, making them susceptible to ailments such as pneumonia." In addition to the crocheted jackets, the elephants have also been provided with woolen blankets and coverings with fleece linings. How have the elephants adjusted to their new clothes? "Some of the elephants like wearing them," Sandilya admits. "Others, not so much." www.wildlifesos.org

EVEN BABY RHINOS NEED THEIR BLANKIES

You think baby rhinos are cute? How about a baby rhino wrapped in a knitted or crocheted blanket?

Cuteness factor aside, blankets provide baby rhinos comfort and critical warmth when they arrive at South Africa's Fundimvelo Thula Thula Rhino Orphanage, based at the private game reserve of the same name. Cape Town resident Sue Brown, who also raises funds for rhino conservation, and veterinarian Elisa Best started the Facebook group **Blankets for Baby Rhinos**, which is dedicated to making and collecting blankets for infant pachyderms orphaned by poachers.

The women also want to raise awareness about poaching with people who may have never been involved in conservation efforts. "Poaching is driven by professional gangs," says Brown about the syndicates that kill rhinos for their horns. "Three to four rhinos on reserves are poached each day. A baby rhino will initially run from its stricken mother but will then return to the body." Without mothers to care for them, calves are often injured and struggle to maintain proper body temperature. If found in time, the animals will be

transferred to a rhino orphanage facility, which is where the blankets come in.

"We have gone far beyond what we had hoped to achieve," Brown says of the Facebook initiative. "We were thinking that a few local crafters would knit some blankets, but [our efforts] very quickly went viral. This is a truly international group, with no barriers of color, race or religion. They are wonderful people who simply want to do something for rhinos."

Today, Blankets for Baby Rhinos counts more than 1,900 crafters as members. Knitted and crocheted blankets are pouring in from collection points throughout the world; they go not only to the Thula Thula orphanage but to the Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage in Kenya as well. The group accepts donations of crocheted and knitted blankets and squares only. For submission requirements, click on the "Files" tab at www.facebook.com/groups/565986000255177.

Editor's note: As this issue was going to press, we received word that the Thula Thula Rhino Orphanage had been attacked by armed poachers. The staff were assaulted and two rhinos were killed.

CABLE LOVE

▼ The **Aran Sweater Market**, longtime purveyors of Aran sweaters from Ireland, recently launched the **Aran Patterns Archive**, featuring hundreds of Aran knitting patterns and designs dating back to the 1920s and '30s. Offering free patterns for men, women and children, along with accessories, the archive is both a treasure-trove of vintage fashion and endless stitchwork inspiration. The archive launched in January, with knitters enthusiastically snapping up patterns. By February 1, more than 500 designs had been downloaded.

"We have collected these patterns for decades from various sources, with many passing down from generation to generation by family members in the business," says brand manager Laura MacSweeney. "Although currently in fashion favor, the Aran sweater is much more than just a passing trend. For most people, it is a timeless reminder of a beloved favorite, a cozy wardrobe staple, a souvenir of one's summer spent exploring Ireland or a memoir of a proud Irish ancestry never to be forgotten." www.aranpatternarchive.com



NEW YEAR, NEW DISTRIBUTION

▼ When **Westminster Fabrics Inc.** announced last year that it would no longer be distributing yarn, it left the British and European brands Rowan, Schachenmayr, Schachenmayr Regia, James Brett and Lopi without U.S. distributorship. Since Westminster's announcement, **Berroco**, which also distributes Lang Yarns and Amano, has taken on U.S. distribution of James Brett yarns and U.S. and Canadian distribution of the Icelandic favorite, Istex Lopi. The longstanding British company **Sirdar** is now distributing Schachenmayr, Schachenmayr Regia and Rowan yarns in the United States. (Read Erin Slonaker's interview with Rowan's brand manager Sharon Brant on page 48.)

CLOSING THE BOOK



After 32 years and 125 issues, **XXR, Inc.**, has closed the cover on *Knitter's Magazine*. Citing the shift in the marketplace from paid-print to free-digital content as a driver for the decision, XXR CEO Benjamin Levisay wrote in his announcement that Stitches events will remain at the center of XXR's business and that fans can expect new Stitches Expos and Camps going forward, along with the occasional book. XXR's digital content is also moving from **knittinguniverse.com** to **stitches.events** and will highlight content by the company's editorial team, led by Rick Mondragon. "Our newest 'pub' will be online, free and cross-craft," Levisay wrote, "extending beyond knit, crochet and other fiber and fabric crafts—creating a space big enough for all we love to do, all we love to make."

KIDS' LIT AND KNIT



▼ **Michelle Edwards's** takeaway from her short stint working with chickens on a kibbutz wasn't so much the clear understanding that poultry wasn't her life's work, but the memory of the "chicken man." "He was a great storyteller," she explains, "the kind of guy who finds the best in everything."

Edwards would go on to become a letterpress printer, illustrating and writing her own handmade books, all while cherishing the memory of her fellow kibbutznik as the seed for a children's book. She wrote and illustrated *The Chicken Man*, the first of her 20 children's books, as a glimpse into life on a kibbutz.

Edwards's most recent book, *A Hat for Mrs. Goldman*, with illustrations by G. Brian Karas, represents a longstanding ambition to weave knitting into her tales of community and Jewish identity. It tells the story of young Sophia and her relationship with the neighborhood knitter/hat maker. When Mrs. Goldman confesses to giving away her only hat—spoiler alert—Sophia takes up needles to knit her generous friend what turns out to be an idiosyncratic pompom-embellished beanie.

"The book seems to be doing very well," says Edwards, a former regular contributor to the Lion Brand Yarn newsletter. "It's not being [pigeonholed] as a 'Jewish' book, but as a book about caring, giving and community, which is what I had hoped for." (*Publishers Weekly* calls it "a supremely lovely story, a tribute to the rewards of grit and selflessness.") She is currently working on a middle-grade novel called the *Gravel Road Gang* about an 11-year-old and her alpaca. Learn more about the author at www.michelledwards.com.

DIY SOLE



▼ Known for its cool kits and hip collabs, **Wool and the Gang** is now selling espadrille soles and crochet espadrille kits. Partnering with the New York espadrille company Soludos, WATG debuted the Ipanema Espadrilles kit last summer, complete with rosewood crochet hook, sewing needle, instruction booklet, espadrille soles, shoe thread and one bobbin of WATG's recycled T-shirt yarn, called Mixtape. The kits quickly sold out. This spring, WATG brought the shoes back, this time offering the soles both in the context of the kit and on their own.

"We so admire the way Soludos has really breathed new life and relevance into the espadrille for a new generation, much like what we are doing with DIY fashion," explains WATG creative director and co-founder **Jade Harwood**. "We are really excited to introduce a new legion of fashion fans to the joys of DIY and more experienced makers to a totally new type of project." www.woolandthegang.com



BRITISH BEAUTY

▼ The U.K.-based **The Fibre Co.** has introduced a new multi-fibered yarn for spring in tandem with a printemps collection of six patterns called April in Paris. Luma, subtitled Threads of Sunlight, is a 50 percent merino, 25 percent organic cotton, 15 percent linen and 10 percent silk DK-weight offered in 12 colors. The yarn is supported by a half-dozen designs (five garments and a shawl) by Emma Wright and Hanna Maciejewska that were inspired by much-loved locales in the City of Light. kelbournwoolens.com

GOOD KNITS

▼ In 2015, **Shahnaz Ahmed** decided to use her stash for good. Knitting up hats and cowls for people living in a refugee and migrant camp near Calais, France, Ahmed put up a Facebook page called **Knit Aid** asking if others might be interested and was soon deluged with donations. Since then, Ahmed and Knit Aid co-director **Karen Whitelaw** have sent thousands of warm items to refugee camps throughout Europe and the Middle East that have been donated by knitters worldwide.

Now, in addition to distributing knitted items, Knit Aid is partnering with the Turkey-based charity ReVi to empower refugees by providing them with a way to sustain their families through knitting. Using yarn donated by the British company Wool and the Gang,



refugees will initially be knitting cowls, beanies and fingerless gloves that Knit Aid will sell, with 100 percent of the profits going to the knitters. Not only will the money help knitters pay for basic needs, Ahmed says, but the refugee knitters will benefit from the therapeutic aspects of knitting as they wait for their asylum applications to process. Shop for the knits at www.knitaid.org.

THE NEW NEW MATH

▼ To get non-math students to warm up to math, assistant mathematics professor **Sara Jensen** of Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin, wrapped her subject in a whole lot of yarn. The course, **Mathematical Knitting**, debuted during the college's January Term, or J-Term, during which intensive classes that allow students and professors to stretch creatively and intellectually are offered.

A mostly self-taught knitter, Jensen wanted to spread her love of the craft while also exposing non-majors to the ways math works in real-life knitting scenarios, but especially how it can be used to model complex theoretical concepts. "I think knitting and math complement each other well," Jensen says. "Math is so abstract and knitting is so physical. It helps with the abstraction of math when you can see the connection and physically touch it."

As part of the class, Jensen taught all 24 students to knit but also referred them to YouTube videos and encouraged them to help each other. Covering topics such as functions and inverses, modular

arithmetic, the topological properties of the Möbius band and fractals, among others, the course also asked students to complete knitting projects designed to illustrate core ideas. In the end everyone in the class knit nine small projects (headbands, cellphone case, mug cozy, coasters, hat, etc.) along with a larger final project they had to present in poster format. "Somebody knit a functioning Rubik's cube out of yarn," Jensen marvels.

The class, which satisfied a college math requirement, filled up and even had a waiting list. Projects that students didn't want to keep were donated to local charities.

At the start of the class, Jensen asked students to reflect in writing their thoughts about math. At the end of the four weeks, students repeated the exercise. "Literally everybody had a change," Jensen says. "They liked math more, they found it more useful and they thought it was more interesting."

TAPE ON DECK



▼ British yarn company **Stylecraft** has released what it calls a first-of-its-kind non-woven tape yarn. Constructed from a blend of polyester and viscose, the yarn knits up quickly on size U.S. 11 needles. The revolutionary new yarn, *Mystique*, comes in six shades and is supported by a range of knitted and crocheted projects. "The non-woven nature of the product makes it extremely light," explains publicist Juliet Bernard. "The 70% polyester/30% viscose construction is soft to the touch and pleasant to wear next to your skin."

www.stylecraft-yarns.co.uk

IN MEMORIAM

Betty Goldstein

Longtime shopkeeper Betty Goldstein died last November at the age of 86. The owner of We'll Keep You in Stitches, a Chicago knitting and needlepoint shop, Goldstein was in business for more than 50 years. An article in the *Chicago Tribune* announcing her death called Goldstein's shop a weekly or daily destination for many stitchers: "Entering Betty Goldstein's needlepoint and knitting shop in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood was instant therapy for countless customers craving the camaraderie that comes with doing something you love in the company of like-minded people."

Richard Wilmarth Power Sr.

Plymouth Yarn Company founder Richard Power Sr. died in November at the age of 92. Power served in the U.S. Army's 35th Engineer Battalion during World War II, which fought in the Battle of the Bulge. Following the war, Power returned to college, earning an economics degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He worked in the textile industry in Philadelphia, eventually founding Plymouth Yarn Company in 1964. (The company continues as a family-owned business and is run by Power's son Richard.)

Sylvia Raider

Knitwear designer and industry leader Sylvia Raider died last December at the age of 93. She was a regular designer for brands including Tahki•Stacy Charles, Filatura Di Crosa, S. Charles Collezione and Tahki Yarns; her work also appeared in *Vogue Knitting*. As her obituary in *The New York Times* stated, "She has left a legacy of how to live a full and productive life."

May 3-7

London Craft Week

Various venues
London, England
londoncraftweek.com

May 5-7

Great Western Alpaca Show

Denver Handmade Homemade
National Western Stock Show Complex
Denver, Colorado
greatwesternalpacashow.com

May 5-7

OKFiberfest

Okanogan County Fairgrounds Agriplex
Okanogan, Washington
okfiberfest.org

May 5-7

Rites of Spring: Fiber Frolic Yarn Tour

Wisconsin shops and farms
ritesofspringfiberfrolic.com

May 6-7

Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival

Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, Maryland
sheepandwool.org

May 11-14

Western North Carolina Yarn Crawl

wncyarncrawl.com

May 12-13

Salomon Farm Park Fiber Arts Celebration

Salomon Farm Park
Fort Wayne, Indiana
fortwayneparks.org

May 12-14

Shepherd's Harvest Sheep & Wool Festival

Washington County Fairgrounds
Lake Elmo, Minnesota
shepherdsharvestfestival.org

May 13-14

New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival

Deerfield Fairgrounds
Deerfield, New Hampshire
nhswga.com

May 17-21

Northwest LYS Tour: Four Days of Fiber Fun

Puget Sound, Washington
lystour.com

May 20-21

Long Island Fleece & Fiber Fair

Hallockville Museum Farm
Riverhead, New York
hallockville.com/fleece-fiber-fair

May 20-21

Spring Fiber Fling

McHenry County Fairgrounds
Woodstock, Illinois
mchenrycountyfair.com/index.php/spring-fiber-fling

May 20-21

Waynesburg Sheep & Fiber Festival

Green County Fairgrounds
Waynesburg, Pennsylvania
waynesburgpa.org/Events/sheep

May 20-21

Kentucky Sheep & Fiber Festival

Masterson State Park
Lexington, Kentucky
kentuckysheepandfiber.com

May 20–21
Ranch Party & Wool Festival
 Casari Ranch
 Point Arena, California
casariranch.com/wool-festival

May 20–21
Tip of the Mitt Fiber Fair
 Emmet County Fairgrounds
 Petoskey, Michigan
facebook.com/mittfiberfair

May 26–27
Middle Tennessee Fiber Festival
 Dickson County Fairgrounds
 Dickson, Tennessee
tnfiberfestival.com

May 26–28
Great Lakes Fiber Show
 Wayne County Fairgrounds
 Wooster, Ohio
greatlakesfibershow.com

May 27–28
Massachusetts Sheep and Woolcraft Fair
 Cummington Fairgrounds
 Cummington, Massachusetts
masheepwool.org

May 27–28
Shupp's Grove Sheep and Wool Festival
 Rheinhold, Pennsylvania
shuppsgrovefiberfestival.com

May 27–29
FiberTrain Wool Festival
 Lloyd Square
 Nampa, Idaho
fibertrainfestival.com

June 1–5
Camp Stitches: Destination Vermont
 The Essex Resort and Spa
 Essex Junction, Vermont
knittinguniverse.com/campvermont

June 2–3
Hoosier Hills Fiber Festival
 Johnson County Fairgrounds
 Franklin, Indiana
hoosierhillsfiberfestival.com

June 3–4
Flag Wool and Fiber Festival
 Pioneer Museum
 Flagstaff, Arizona
flagwool.com

June 3–4
Maine Fiber Frolic
 Windsor Fairgrounds
 Windsor, Maine
fiberfrolic.com

June 3–4
Mid-Ohio Fiber Fair
 The Shops at Worthington Place Mall
 Worthington, Ohio
midohiofiberfair.com

June 8–11
Estes Park Wool Market
 Estes Park Events Complex
 Estes Park, Colorado
estesparkeventscomplex.com/wool-market

June 10
World Wide Knit in Public Day
www.kipday.com

June 10–11
Fiber Fest
 The Frederick News Post
 Frederick, Maryland
fnp.events/events

June 10–11
Central New York Fiber Festival
 Butternut Hill Campground
 Bouckville, New York
cnyfiber.org

June 10–12
TNNA Summer Trade Show
 Greater Columbus Convention Center
 Columbus, Ohio
tnna.org

June 12–18
Sheep Is Life Celebration
 Diné College, Tsailé Campus
 Navajo Nation
navajolifeway.org

June 16–22
Fibre Week
 Olds College
 Olds, Alberta, Canada
oldscollege.ca/continuing-education/fibre/fibre-week

June 17–18
Iowa Sheep and Wool Festival
 Hansen Agriculture Student Learning Center
 Ames, Iowa
iowasheepandwoolfestival.com

June 22–25
I-91 Shop Hop
 New Haven, Connecticut,
 to Putney, Vermont
facebook.com/I-91-Shop-Hop-193735270750075

June 23–25
Houston Fiber Fest
 Berry Center
 Cypress, Texas
houstonfiberfest.com

June 23–25
Black Sheep Fiber Gathering
 Lane County Fairgrounds
 Eugene, Oregon
blacksheepgathering.org

July 8–9
British Wool Show
 Thirsk Auction Mart & Rural Business Centre
 Thirsk, North Yorkshire
 England
britishwool.net

July 14–23
Great Northern Arts Festival
 Inuvik, Northwest Territories,
 Canada
gnaf.org

July 26–29
Crochet Guild of America Conference
 The Westin Chicago Northwest
 Itasca, Illinois
crochet.org/?page=Conference

July 29–August 13
Hot August Knits Yarn Crawl
 Northern Colorado and Southern Wyoming
hotaugustknits.com

July 31–August 13
Schoodic Arts Festival: Fiber
 Hammond Hall
 Winter Harbor, Maine
schoodicartsforall.org

August 3–6
Stitches Midwest
 Schaumburg Renaissance and Convention Center
 Schaumburg, Illinois
knittinguniverse.com/midwest2017

August 16–20
Michigan Fiber Festival
 Allegan County Fairgrounds
 Allegan, Michigan
michiganfiberfestival.info

August 19–20
Twist Fibre Festival
 Saint-Andre-Avellin, Quebec
 Canada
festivaltwist.org

August 19–27
Yarn Along the Rockies Yarn Crawl
yarnalongtherockies.com

September 6–10
Fiber College of Maine
 Searsport Shores Ocean Camping
 Searsport, Maine
fibercollege.org

September 7–9
Georgia FiberFest
 Columbus Convention & Trade Center
 Columbus, Georgia
gafiberfest.com

September 7–10
Vogue Knitting LIVE Destination Experience
 Santa Rosa, CA
vogueknittinglive.com/portal/destinations

September 7–10
Wisconsin Sheep and Wool Festival
 Jefferson Fair Park
 Jefferson, Wisconsin
wisconsinssheepandwoolfestival.com

September 9–10
Garden State Sheep and Fiber Festival
 Hunterdon County Fairgrounds
 Lambertville, New Jersey
njssheep.net

September 9–10
Pennsylvania Endless Mountains Fiber Festival
 Harford Fairgrounds
 Harford, Pennsylvania
endlessmountainsfiberfest.com

September 9–10
Salida Fiber Festival
 Riverside Park
 Salida, Colorado
salidafiberfestival.com

September 14–17
Stitches Texas
 Irving Convention Center
 Irving, Texas
knittinguniverse.com

September 16–17
Finger Lakes Fiber Festival
 Hemlock Fairgrounds
 Hemlock, New York
gvyh.org/fiber-fest

September 16–17
Wool Gathering
 Young's Jersey Dairy
 Yellow Springs, Ohio
youngsdairy.com/wool-gathering

September 2–24
Sneffels Fiber Festival
 4-H Events Center
 Ouray County Fairgrounds
 Ridgway, Colorado
sneffelsfiberfest.com

September 23–24
Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival
 Clackamas County Event Center
 Canby, Oregon
flockandfiberfestival.com

September 23–24
Shenandoah Valley Fiber Festival
 Clarke County Ruritan Fairgrounds
 Berryville, Virginia
shenandoahvalleyfiberfestival.com

September 23–24
Yarndale
 Skipton Auction Mart
 Skipton, England
yarndale.co.uk

September 30–October 1
Northern Michigan Lamb & Wool Festival
 Ogemaw County Fairgrounds,
 West Branch, Michigan
lambandwoolfestival.com

▼ Knitting From the North

By Hilary Grant

Roost Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1611803884

Scottish designers Hilary Grant and Robert Harvey, whose knitwear and home accessories are sold in department stores and shops under Grant's name, present their first



collection of hand-knitting patterns. The lushly photographed book, which combines classic shapes

with untraditional patterns, allows readers to create garments influenced by Fair Isle and Nordic knitting traditions but with a sleek style all their own. The book eschews traditional motifs like snowflakes and crosses, using elongated shapes that resemble feathers, arrows and pixelated peeries. The resulting patterns manage to feel both familiar and fresh. Most are for accessories, with a few striking sweaters rounding out the collection. Added bonus: lovely photographs showcasing the beauty of Scotland's Orkney archipelago.

▼ 6000+ Pullover Possibilities

By Melissa Leapman

Sixth&Spring Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1936096947

Despite the ever-growing number of sweater patterns available, many knitters still have trouble finding their ideal garment. Different shoulder styles, necklines, sleeves and shapes make it tough to choose, as does a lack of understanding about what will



look and feel good on their bodies. Melissa Leapman comes to the rescue with this fabulous resource,

allowing knitters to select their preferred elements and combine them into the perfect pullover. Start by exploring silhouettes, then pick a favorite neckline, sleeve shape, edge treatment and more. Each option is laid out using instructions and tables for a range of eight sizes and nine different gauges. The remarkable

amount of information presented makes this a book that will stand the test of time—and help knitters produce pullovers that they love to knit and wear.

▼ Huggable Amigurumi

By Shannen Nicole Chua

Martingale & Co.; \$18.99

ISBN: 978-1604688443

It's an amigurumi world, and crochet designer Shannen Chua is helping populate it with a Noah's ark full of lovable animals. Chua, a college student, designs gleeful charm into each sofie: a giraffe gets 3-D spots,



a teddy bear sports overalls and a sailor hat, Tom Turkey dons a Pilgrim hat and customizable feathers.

Lots of close-up photos and clear directions make these cuties both easy and fun to make, while their larger-than-usual size (6 to 12 inches tall) makes them extra huggable.

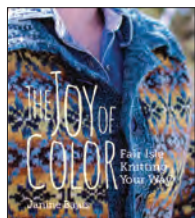
▼ The Joy of Color: Fair Isle Knitting Your Way

By Janine Bajus

Willia Jane Press; \$40

ISBN: 978-0997523409

Many a knitter has gazed upon a spectacular Fair Isle sweater and sighed, "I wish I could do that!" Designer/instructor Janine Bajus will teach you how with this stranded-knitting workshop in a book. An adventurous knitter herself, Bajus starts with the assumption that



every knitter finds his or her own way and provides a wealth of information to help knitters master

the art of stranded knitting. Chapters discuss design inspiration, color theory and swatching and focus as well on design essentials like pattern bands, steeks and finishing. Especially helpful is the author's "case study" approach, using photographs of specific sweaters as jumping-off

points for exploring the design challenges that two-color knitting can pose. If you aren't already fascinated with Fair Isle when you pick up Bajus's information-packed book, you will be by the time you finish it.

▼ Tup Knits

By Ann Kingstone

Ann Kingstone Designs; £15.00

ISBN: 978-09956286



Yorkshire-based designer Ann Kingstone, known for her delightful stranded patterns, grew up surrounded by sheep. She's

channeled her love for the fleecy beast into a slim volume of designs sure to appeal to fellow fanatics. Sheep cavort around sweater necklines and yokes, adorn wrists and frolic on hats and socks. Generous sizing is a plus, as is the techniques section, which includes instructions and diagrams to help your knitting go smoothly.

▼ Double or Nothing: Reversible Knitting for the Adventurous

By Alasdair Post-Quinn

Fallingblox Designs; \$29.95

ISBN: 978-0998247205

Devotees of double-knitting, take note: Fearless innovator Alasdair Post-Quinn is back with a new book



that pushes the boundaries of this unique

two-color technique, which allows a knitter to create truly reversible patterns by working both sides at once. Patterns feature complex motifs like curlicues, triangles, honeycombs and stripes and incorporate techniques ranging from lace and entrelac to cables and multicolor knitting. Given the intricacy of the techniques, most garments are relatively small (hats, mittens, scarves), keeping things manageable. Post-Quinn includes loads of written explanations and photographs to clarify his techniques, but it's the

limit-pushing designs that really make this resource special.

▼ Knitting Woolsapes

By Marlie de Swart

Marlie de Swart/Bo-Rage

Design; \$28.95

ISBN: 978-0692742938

Marlie de Swart takes knitting local to a new level with her inspirational collection of designs inspired by the Coast Marin area where she lives. De Swart raises her own sheep and alpaca, sending a few fleeces and blankets to a local mill each year for processing and spinning the rest



herself. More than 25 designs knit in these luscious yarns will inspire

readers, blending cosmopolitan style with lanolin-scented country goodness. The book's first two sections feature garments and accessories knit in natural shades of wool and alpaca, with clever details and unusual methods of construction. A third section focuses on color, whether plied, dyed or knit together, emphasizing handspun and hand-dyed yarns. De Swart's dreamy book, filled with photographs and inspiration, is sure to appeal to knitters looking for creative construction and a fresh sensibility.

▼ Creature Features

Lark Crafts; \$17.95

ISBN: 978-1454709855

Baby booties present a terrific canvas for playing with design; they're small projects that can allow for the cute, the whimsical and the just plain silly. This book assembles a collection of 30 crocheted booties, a truly comprehensive selection of



just about any style of slipper a crocheter could imagine. In addition to plenty of animal-themed

footwear (pandas, elephants, octopi, sheep, foxes and busy bees), there are creatures from the great beyond (monsters, aliens and dragons) and a hilarious mélange inspired by food (eggs and bacon, anyone?). Whether you've a yen to knit booties inspired by hammerhead sharks or a pair of California rolls, you'll find plenty of design choices in this fun, funky collection.

▼ **60 Quick Knitted Toys**
Sixth&Spring Books; \$17.95
ISBN: 978-1942021445

Whether you need a shower gift or are just in the mood to make a huge stuffed stegosaurus, you'll be



charmed by the latest book in Cascade Yarns' "60 Quick" series. Cute and clever patterns for

games, pillows and plenty of soft toys give the knitter oodles of options to knit for babies and kids. Active kids will enjoy building with blocks or "fishing" with rod and line; imaginative tots will act out stories with puppets or soft plush toys; and just about any kid will fall in love with snuggly bunnies, teddies and dolls. Don't miss the "nesting" dolls inspired by Russian matryoshka sets, the feisty family of bobcats or the adorable build-a-castle set (royal family and dragon patterns included, natch).

▼ **The Big Book of Knit Stitches**
Martingale & Co.; \$22.99
ISBN: 978-1604688603

If you think you've lost your knitting mojo, it's time to pick up a copy of this dictionary of more than 350 different stitches. Shown in large-



format photos with written instructions (but no charts), they are sensibly organized by type: cables and twists, lace, knit/purl

texture, ribs, and bobbles/slip stitches. It's also the perfect guide for a newbie to branch out and see the incredible variety of stitches

that can be created with two sticks and some string.

▼ **25 Stylish Knitted Slippers**
By Rae Blackledge
Stackpole Books; \$21.95
ISBN: 978-0811714075

At the end of a long day, nothing beats kicking off those shoes and putting on a pair of slippers—knitted



slippers, of course. Designer Rae Blackledge of Willow Yarns gives your tired toes a choice of knitted footwear

of just about every iteration. Felted slippers and thick, cozy bedsocks are just the beginning; you can stitch up footgear styled like moccasins, clogs, espadrilles and lace-up loafers, or indulge your whimsical side with dinosaur "boots," elf slippers, ballet shoes and two-toned oxfords. Patterns come in multiple sizes (some including options for both men and women); clear directions with large charts and photos turn every reader into a knitting cobbler.

▼ **Learn How to Knit With 50 Squares**
By Che Lam
St. Martin's Griffin; \$22.99
ISBN: 978-1250069955

Che Lam, a former DROPS designer, gently walks beginners through a knitting workshop based entirely on squares. By streamlining the knitter's focus, Lam progressively builds skills while introducing students to a variety of stitch patterns. Following a garter-stitch and then a stockinette



square, new techniques are introduced one at a time: a decrease, an increase, a ribbing pattern, eventually

building up to more complex skills like cables and lace stitches. An introductory section sets out all the basics for getting started, and five easy patterns provide additional ways to expand a newbie knitter's repertoire. Lam's workshop is a great way for a self-directed learner

to build skills but would also form a solid basis for a weekly knit-a-square night at the local yarn shop.

▼ **Designer Crochet Accessories**
By Melissa Leapman
Creative Publishing Int'l; \$21.99
ISBN: 978-1589239289

Even the greatest outfit sometimes needs the oomph of an eye-catching accessory, and you'll find plenty of fresh and contemporary choices in prolific designer Melissa Leap-



man's latest collection. Whether you're looking for a dramatic "boa" scarf,

a shawl or a wrap to throw over your shoulders or a sassy piece of jewelry, Leapman's got the fashion-forward crocheter covered. Patterns show the myriad ways that crochet shines, with clever details like chain-loop edging, Aran-style cables and beading. Each pattern is presented in both word and chart form, and photographs with plenty of detail help guide readers along.

▼ **Grumpy Cat's Knitting Nightmares**

By Grumpy Cat
Dover; \$15.95
ISBN: 978-0486806112

The Internet is made of cats—and now those cats are making inroads into knitwear design, as web icon Grumpy Cat presents her first collection, assisted by a team of human designers who've crafted 15 knitting patterns inspired by Her Not-at-All-Serene Highness. Highlights include a colorwork sweater featuring Grumpy Cat's likeness, a toy version of Grumpy Cat, a hat with kitty ears, even a tablet cover. Anyone brave enough to knit items for a cat to wear can opt for a kitty hat, scarf and collars, along



with toys and a cushy bed. Feline projects are, of course, modeled by Tardar Sauce (Grumpy Cat's real name),

while human projects are modeled by Grumpy Cat's owner, Tabatha Bundesen. Knit them—if you dare.

■ **BESTSELLER WATCH**

Here's what topped the bestseller lists the first week of April 2017:

Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

2. *The Sock Knitter's Handbook*, by Beth Parrott (Martingale)
3. *750 Knitting Stitches* (St. Martin's Griffin)
4. *Knitted Cable Sourcebook*, by Norah Gaughan (Harry N. Abrams)
5. *Stitch 'n Bitch*, by Debbie Stoller (Workman)
6. *Cast On, Bind Off*, by Leslie Ann Bestor (Storey)

Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

1. *A to Z Crochet* (Martingale & Co.)
8. *Every Which Way Crochet Borders*, by Edie Eckman (Storey)
9. *The Complete Book of Crochet Stitch Designs*, by Linda P. Schapper (Lark Crafts)
10. *Star Wars Crochet*, by Lucy Collins (Thunder Bay Press)
12. *Star Wars Even More Crochet*, by Lucy Collins (Thunder Bay Press)

Barnes & Noble Knitting List

1. *Knit Stitch Pattern Handbook*, by Melissa Leapman (Potter Craft)
2. *Basic Knitting Projects*, by Leigh Ann Chow (Stackpole Books)
3. *Knitted Cable Sourcebook*, by Norah Gaughan (Harry N. Abrams)
4. *Stitch 'n Bitch*, by Debbie Stoller (Workman)
5. *400 Knitting Stitches* (Potter Craft)

As speckled yarns take the hand-dyeing world by storm, yarn companies continue to find new ways to innovate with color.

By Christina Behnke

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCUS TULLIS



Freia Fine Handpaints Ombré Fingering Shawl Ball

Specs: 42 colors; 100% U.S. cruelty-free merino; 430yd/100g

Gauge: 20–28 sts = 4" on U.S. 3–7 needles

Distinctions: Leave it to the original ombré dyer to innovate the technique. Freia's four new gradients are palindromic, with understated tonals surrounding a fluorescent center. In Krypton, hot lime radiates into shades of sage and honeydew.

Projects: The new Ombré Fingering Shawl Ball has enough yardage to knit or crochet its namesake. The pillowy merino singles yarn lends loft and definition to lace and stripes.

TO DYE FOR



Cascade Yarns 220 Superwash Effects

Specs: 14 Effects colors (153 in all); 100% superwash wool; 220yd/100g

Gauge: 20–22 sts = 4" on U.S. 6–7 needles

Distinctions: A classic mainstay gets a hip update with the stonewashed Effects line, which features natural-toned wool "glazed" with mottled dyes. #10 Lightning Storm pairs bright plum with neutral charcoal, recalling the look of plaid flannel.

Projects: Great for simple, casual garments, 220 Superwash Effects gives hoodies and beanies a lived-in look. Try pairing it with coordinating solids.

The Fiber Seed Sprout Worsted

Specs: 14 Speckles colors (92 in all); 90% superwash merino wool, 10% nylon; 225yd/140g

Gauge: 18–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–8 needles

Distinctions: Known for its richly saturated hand-dyes, The Fiber Seed recently launched its own take on speckled yarns. Though the Speckles collection includes traditional splatter-dyes, the contrasted duotones—like crave-inducing #SP068 Fun Fetti—bring the technique to creative new levels.

Projects: Designed especially for Sprout Worsted, Talitha Kuomi's planned-pooling Depth cowl showcases these colors to best effect.



Artyarns Merino Cloud

Specs: 193 colors; 80% fine merino, 20% cashmere; 437yd/100g

Gauge: 22 sts = 4" on U.S. 5 needles

Distinctions: The newest hand-paints in Artyarns' ever-expanding range are dynamic and painterly, with a more free-form approach that suggests impressionistic landscapes. Color #603 electrifies a soothing aqua/cornflower blue background with dapples of coral and shocking pink. It's Monet for the 21st century.

Projects: Kitten-soft Merino Cloud begs to be worn close to the neck, so showcase this intricate colorway in a simple shawl.



Koigu Wool Designs Chelsea Aran

Specs: Hundreds of colors; 100% merino wool; 125yd/100g

Gauge: 12 sts = 4" on U.S. 8 needles

Distinctions: While Koigu is no stranger to the speckled look that's currently trending—one might claim they invented it—new yarn base Chelsea Aran allows us to appreciate their intricate handpaints up close. Color #C882B is stippled and streaked with a multilayered rainbow of candy brights, creating a hologram-like look.

Projects: Flaunt it with simple accessories. This bouncy farmhouse 3-ply loves stockinette, garter and basic crochet.



Classic Elite Yarns Sandpiper

Specs: 9 colors; 100% cotton; 114yd/50g

Gauge: 18–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 5–7 needles

Distinctions: Marls made one better: Eight variegated cotton threads, each sporting five coordinated shades, are spun together to create shimmering colorscares. High-contrast #1904 Aqua looks especially dynamic when knit or crocheted.

Projects: Each of Sandpiper's color selections pairs up beautifully for bright striped looks. Thanks to its high number of plies, the rounded strand takes well to texture in summery tops and shawls.



yarn reviews continue on page 18

TO DYE FOR



Plymouth Yarn Co. Happy Feet 100 Splash Hand-dyed

Specs: 7 colors; 90% superwash merino, 10% nylon; 384yd/100g

Gauge: 32 sts = 4" on U.S. 2 needles

Distinctions: Stippled on a springy 2-ply strand, the colors in Happy Feet 100 Splash Hand-dyed remain more concentrated, creating speckled shades with bold intensity and contrast. #101 Crayon is peppered with brightly colored dabs that mingle without blending.

Projects: A high merino-to-nylon ratio makes this a soft and squishy choice for trendy baby sweaters or extra-special socks.

Lorna's Laces Solemate

Specs: Hundreds of colors; 55% superwash merino wool, 30% Outlast viscose, 15% nylon; 425yd/100g

Gauge: 28 sts = 4" on U.S. 1 needles

Distinctions: In 2012, Lorna's Laces joined the speckled hand-dye movement with its exclusive Newsprint shade. Their new Splatters with Matching Friends series pairs six coordinating speckled and variegated colors. Featuring airbrushed Day-Glo splashed on white, #917 Zoe proves that neon plus neutral is always chic.

Projects: Stripe with rainbow-bright Bonanza to make a sunny summer shawl or "best friend" socks in cooling Solemate.



Prism Madison

Specs: 15 Ikat colors (hundreds in all); 75% merino, 15% cashmere, 10% silk; 170yds/100g

Gauge: 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 9 needles

Distinctions: Precision-dyed for Magic Number color-stacked knitting, Ikat colors alternate two analogous hues with cream. Knit using the technique, the seamless tonal shifts form soft-edged colorblocks or subtle plaids. In Ikat Aqua, stretches of silvery aqua and deep teal seem to melt into the pale base.

Projects: Sleek, velvety Madison creates luxurious cowls, which offer an easy introduction to Magic Number knitting.





Brown Sheep Co. Lamb's Pride Superwash Worsted

Specs: 161 colors; 100% wool; 200yds/100g

Gauge: 18–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–8 needles

Distinctions: Brown Sheep's heathered shades are truly dyed in the wool. Using a pin drafter, the company mixes different colors of roving wool through multiple passes prior to spinning. Enriched with faceted sparkle, new #SW134 Precious Emerald blends hints of mint and blue into a teal base.

Projects: Crisp and robust, Lamb's Pride Superwash Worsted is a natural for patterned afghans and kids' knits.

Schoppel Wolle Wunderkleckse

Specs: 11 colors; 75% superwash virgin wool, 25% nylon; 459yd/100g

Gauge: 30 sts = 4" on U.S. 0–2 needles

Distinctions: Formed from a knitted blank that's painted and then unraveled, each ball of Wunderkleckse is unique. Color #2322 sports dabs of green, gold, red and black—though how they'll pool is for you to discover. Some skeins create a tie-dyed look, while others are striated.

Projects: A high-twist 4-ply, Wunderkleckse is a classic sock yarn. The free-form dye technique will create an artfully mismatched pair.



Mirasol Pima Splash

Specs: 17 colors; 100% cotton; 219yd/100g

Gauge: 16–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–9 needles

Distinctions: Pima Splash's initial color selections featured variegated jewel tones spattering a pale background; their newest shades take a more subtle approach by freckling pastels and brights with complementary colors. #112 Magnolia flecks a pale yellow base with multidimensional copper and navy.

Projects: The chainette construction and smooth, cool hand make for effortless crochet. Use it for comfortable, close-fitting summer garments.

TNNA Continues to Bloom and Grow

The start of 2017 has seen a whirlwind of activity for The National NeedleArts Association, and our plans are proceeding full steam ahead as we push into summer. We kicked off the year with our winter trade show in San Jose, California. More than 1,100 needlearts aficionados enjoyed access to the latest styles, trends and products. The fashion shows highlighted the latest runway trends, everything from knit and crochet wear to needlepoint and counted thread. The Galleria gave attendees the chance to view inspiring works by today's top designers. Sample IT! presented retailers with an opportunity to purchase sample kits and products before ordering. The Industry Services Showcase gave professionals who provide services to the needlearts industry a venue to connect with attendees seeking their expertise. And, of course, attendees joined with colleagues, friends and fellow needlearts professionals to network and share their experiences.

We received great feedback on our re-

vamped educational offerings, Business Data Made Simple, Expanding Your Expertise, The Two-Way Conversation, Leveraging New Tools & Technology, and Building Better Business. We're continuing to refine our class offerings to ensure members are receiving access to the programming that best suits their needs.

Our upcoming summer trade show—in Columbus, Ohio, from June 10–12—is the perfect place to network, see the latest in fall and winter trends, and learn from industry experts. Visit tnna.org/summer for complete class listings, schedules-at-a-glance and more.

Have you noticed a change in recent communications from TNNA? We listened to your feedback and reevaluated the way we bring news to our members. It is our goal to communicate more clearly and more often to keep members informed, connected and engaged. To that end, our content committee unveiled a redesigned TNNANews as a twice-monthly e-newsletter to deliver the latest TNNA updates, business tips, industry news

and needlearts happenings.

On a final note, I would like to highlight the TNNA 2016 NeedleArts Market Summary. Released in November 2016 as part of the TNNA State of Specialty NeedleArts Study, the report provides crucial data to help you take advantage of the \$2.5 billion needlearts consumer market and grow your business. The TNNA 2016 Market Summary includes per-segment market sizes for participants and enthusiasts; spending habits by retail channel; growth trends; financial benchmarks for retailers and wholesalers; demographics and more. Did I mention that this study is available free as a TNNA member benefit?

Join today at tnna.org to take advantage of all the exclusive benefits that our 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, education 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.

Inspired by international trends and the raw beauty of native New Zealand. 23 beautiful new colours have been added to our Zealana colour palette.



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Bored Now? CYC Can Help

The lazy days of summer are just around the corner. Did you know that July is National Anti-Boredom month? Last July, we encouraged people to fight the doldrums by joining the Craft Yarn Council in a giant project swap with some of our favorite makers in the crafting community; we featured a different maker and a different project each week of the month. Thousands of crocheters and knitters joined the fun.

This year our plans are even bigger and better, and we encourage you to join our efforts by whipping up enthusiasm among your staff and customers; by doing so, we hope to encourage traffic and sales during a time when shops often experience a sales slowdown.

First up is our “Crafty Not Bored” Amigurumi Potluck. We are encouraging knitters, crocheters and yarn lovers in general to scour the Internet for their favorite knitted and crocheted “food” projects. At the end of the month, amigurumi makers will share their “dishes” on social media during the potluck

using the hashtag #craftynotbored.

The Craft Yarn Council will promote the potluck primarily through social media. We plan to share with our followers amigurumi food patterns, live videos (pompom food ideas, things to stuff your projects with, etc.), projects for your kitchen, a contest, blogger takeovers, crochet-alongs and knit-alongs, fun and original graphics, and so much more. We will be using the hashtag #craftynotbored all month long.

We invite stores to join us in injecting some fun into an otherwise slow month. First, be sure to follow the Craft Yarn Council on Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest so you can share and participate in our activities all month long. Next, engage your customers. Some ideas for creating events around the theme include hosting an amigurumi “food-making” class; putting together a collection of amigurumi patterns, both free and for purchase; organizing your own potluck at the end of the month at which customers can show off their finished items (make it an actual potluck by ask-

ing customers to provide edible counterparts to their stitched creations); sponsoring a contest to see who can make the most creative food item; and collecting amigurumi food items to donate to a local children’s organization in need of toys.

Don’t hesitate to reach out to the Craft Yarn Council as you plan your activities. Use the assets and materials we can provide—printed and digital—on your social media sites and in-store to help us promote the Crafty Not Bored Amigurumi Potluck. If you are interested in these assets, email info@craftyarncouncil.com with the subject line “Yarn Shop Crafty Not Bored Assets.” In the body of the email include your name, store name, city and state along with links to your social media pages. Let us know what special event tie-ins you plan during July so we can help promote them on CYC’s social media too. Together we can engage our customers in fun and different summertime activities and, if we’re fortunate, catch the attention of an entirely new audience.

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



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Announcing Local Yarn Store Day

When I began my tenure as Yarn Group chair in fall 2015, TNNA was in need of a new direction, one that would reflect the way businesses were operating in the new digital era. TNNA was uniquely primed for a strategic redevelopment of what the organization was, what we did, who we served, and what we hoped to accomplish for our members and our industry.

What a long way we've come! With the help of McKinley Advisors, TNNA completed a strategic analysis of our association; these findings were presented to the board following the January trade show in San Jose, California, and will be shared with TNNA members over the next few months. The board is currently studying ways to implement the recommendations. Who actually can become a member is one of things we are looking to change. I have gotten a lot of feedback over the past year from indie dyers, designers and other non-traditional business owners about TNNA

membership, and we're hoping to revamp the system to make it even more accessible.

At our January meeting, we were happy to announce our new Yarn Group initiative, Local Yarn Store Day, a bricks-and-mortar-shop appreciation day. TNNA and Yarn Group want to show the world that we are committed to small, independent yarn shops. We hope that this day becomes one of celebration of our creative community, where manufacturers, dyers, designers and bloggers show their support of the independent LYS. The goal is to encourage people to visit their local yarn shop on a specific day. The overall concept is that customers would have access to unique items and promotions available only in participating shops. In addition, shops would be part of a nationwide campaign designed to drive business into the stores.

Think of it as a nationwide yarn crawl. Your opportunity as independent shops is to demonstrate to our industry, and to the community at

large, the value of your small business. LYSes are the conduit between the yarn companies, designers and dyers and the yarn consumer. Local Yarn Store Day recognizes the power of locally owned shops and the many ways they benefit not just our industry but the local community as well. Local Yarn Store Day is tentatively slated for a date to be determined in April 2018. If you are interested in learning more or would like to volunteer, please contact yarngroup@tnna.org.

After a successful January show with our new management company, we are looking forward to the June show in Columbus, Ohio. (I for one am excited for another visit to Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream.) Education starts on June 8. TNNA now has a dedicated education team, so be on the lookout for more ways to learn and grow your business: Build your customer base, learn new skills, hone your social media presence, and more with the yarn industry's best educators.

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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SPINNING & WEAVING GROUP

BY RITA PETTEYS, CHAIRPERSON



Take Us for a Spin

As Spinzilla enters its fifth year, let's review how you can participate in the Spinning and Weaving Group's main event, even if you've never hosted a team before. Spinzilla 2017 is scheduled for October 2–8, and it promises to be another great year celebrating the love of spinning and creating yarn by hand.

In 2016, more than 70 intrepid teams from around the world participated. These spinners gathered together physically and virtually for one week to spin as much yarn as possible—a whopping 5,507,622 yards. How often do people get to participate in an event that creates five million of anything? To better understand this number, think of it in terms of miles—approximately 3,100 of them, the distance between New York City and Dublin, Ireland.

The four-year totals are even more impressive: More than 16 million yards of yarn—more than 9,000 miles—has been spun. That's enough yarn, when laid end to end, to encircle

more than one third of Earth.

Spinzilla has greatly contributed to the growth of the spinning community in numbers, skills and connections. Spinners from around the world join these teams and forge new relationships and challenge each other to spin more yarn, try new techniques and hone their skills. Harness this enthusiasm by participating in events like Spinzilla, and that love will be spread to your shop. Scheduling classes and workshops in the months leading up to Spinzilla will help your customers improve their skills, which will give them the confidence to spin a lot of yarn. Invite your local guild to partner with your business to create a team and develop a training plan. Create a social spinning calendar to broaden the spinning community and enhance relationships. Spinners will enjoy the company and the opportunity to swap hints and tricks that make hand-spinning work for them.

If you are just hearing about Spinzilla and

want to get up to speed, check out the Spinzilla website at www.spinzilla.org. There you'll find a wealth of information to get you started, including many resources that you can use to get your spinning community excited. Be sure to read and share the extensive blog posts and the blog tour from the past four Spinzilla events, featuring writing by celebs in the needlearts and related industries. They share their expertise on topics that are sure to help you and your spinning community gain more confidence and enjoyment out of your hand spinning.

The Spinzilla website also has information about signing up a team, sponsorship and results reporting. Spend some time checking it out; we think that you'll find Spinzilla could be a great fit for your business and help you grow your spinning community.

The Spinning and Weaving Group would like to thank all of the 2017 sponsors who help make this event possible.

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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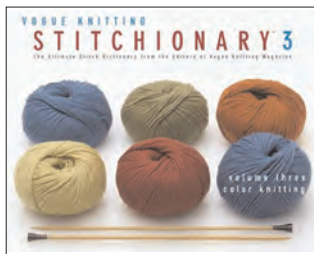
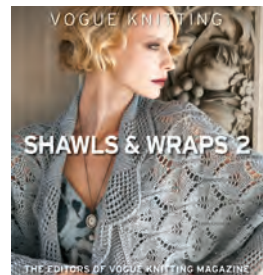
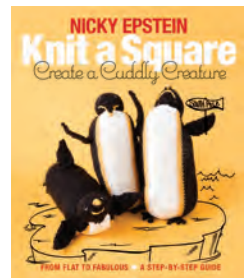
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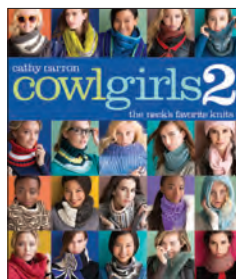


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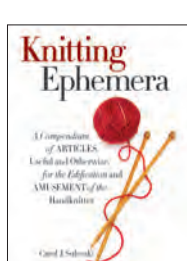
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ASSOCIATION FOR CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

BY KRISTEN FARRELL, MANAGER OF MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS



Announcing the AFCI

Earlier this year at Creativation, our annual trade event, we revealed that the organization you knew as the Craft & Hobby Association has rebranded as the Association for Creative Industries (AFCI). Our name change is designed to embrace the thousands of global member companies we represent and better align with the entire industry we support. We heard again and again from our members that the name "Craft and Hobby Association" was not broad enough to attract many of our peers and colleagues in the global creative-arts community.

Through extensive market research, we have developed a new strategy that is so much more than just a refreshed brand and logo. The AFCI board of directors and staff have set the course for a strong and successful future as the pre-eminent voice of and an unmatched resource to support the continued growth of the creative arts industries, including the yarn market.

The creative world is so much more than arts and crafts, and it's expanding globally at

an astounding pace. Here are a few new benefits your yarn business can take advantage of as an AFCI member:

Start-up Membership. Last year, we introduced this category to provide new businesses with access to resources they need to jump-start their growth. We've created a program focused on educating, connecting, inspiring and enabling entrepreneurs, including access to all AFCI membership benefits: free access to Creativation, new industry research, health and business insurance, discounts with Office Depot, UPS and other companies, and more.

Industry Research. In partnership with MaritzCX, we released our 2016 Creative Products Size of the Industry Study earlier this year, which revealed that the U.S. creative products industries are valued at \$40+ billion. We will research and release new findings on an ongoing basis to offer our members insights about their customers and help them make critical business decisions. More information about the channels

through which consumers purchase craft products will be released this summer. AFCI members can access current and future reports at no additional cost at afci.global.

Creativation. We've also reinvented our annual trade event, building a creative destination where the entire industry can come to learn, connect and discover. We've transformed our trade-show floor into a creative city where our exhibitors' booths are storefronts and new areas represent places you would see on "Main Street." This year, attendees networked and explored Creativation by following street signs and riding on our hop-on/hop-off tour bus. Highly trafficked areas included our Artisan Plaza, Art Studio, Innovations Center, International Pub, Maker Space, Michaels bookstore and Satin Ice Edible Arts Shoppe. We received incredible feedback and are gearing up for another successful event in 2018 (January 18-22 at the Phoenix Convention Center) that your business won't want to miss.

The AFCI is the premier trade association for the global creative arts products industries. Our members include the manufacturers, retailers, distributors, designers, educators, digital content providers, professional makers and DIYers and other creative professionals who comprise the \$40 billion+ creative-arts industries around the globe. For more information about AFCI, membership or the annual Creativation trade event, visit afci.global.



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Ravelry Celebrates Ten Years

In 2017, Ravelry will celebrate its tenth year online and pass the seven-million-member mark. More than one million users access the site each month, with pattern and yarn searches continuing to be the most popular site features. We are working on ways to celebrate our anniversary with the Ravelry community and are incredibly grateful to have been able to serve and connect yarn lovers for the past decade.

Recent yarn attribute additions to the yarn database pages are making that feature more robust. Attributes allow yarn companies to share specific details about their yarns' origins, the specific fiber types and treatments (such as supervash), the care required, color attributes, construction, dyes, plies and more. Yarnies are still adding this information to their Ravelry yarn pages, but you can search these attributes already in the "attributes" filter in our advanced yarn search. This allows users to search yarns based on their characteristics.

We continue to make improvements to our mobile site, which now allows views of the

forums, message boxes, pattern searches, library and (our most recent addition) pattern pages. These mobile pages are designed for phones and other small screens, no matter which platform is being used. Each mobile page includes the same information you'll see on a Ravelry page on your computer, but it is displayed in a way that is easier to view and navigate on mobile devices.

The In-Store Sales service continues to grow, with more shops being activated every week. In the United States alone, there are 2,880 LYSes that we are aware of in the Ravelry database; nearly 1,200 of those shops have made at least one In-Store Sale. On average, there were just under 14,000 In-Store Sales made each month during the last half of 2016. The most popular pattern sold through In-Store Sales in the latter half of the year was Heidi May's Azel Pullover. (We suspect that a lot of shops have had samples of this pattern made up.) The second most popular pattern was the perennial favorite (and number-one seller in the first half of the year), Hitchhiker by Martina Behm.

The information on your shop's Ravelry directory page is public, meaning that these pages will show up in Google searches and be viewable without a login to people who aren't Ravelry users. Be sure to connect to your shop's directory page so that you can edit the information and list your shop's hours and address, as well upload some great photos of your shop to entice searchers to visit. If you have an active Ravelry LYS ad, we will also display a "yarns" tab on your shop's page that lists all the yarns you have in your ad.

Join us in the Ravelry Shopkeepers group if you have any questions about using the In-Store Sales service or if you have feature requests that you would like to share with us. Shopkeepers is also where we make announcements related to Ravelry Pattern Sales, and we welcome everyone to join us there. For advertising questions, we have the Ravelry Advertisers' group; for general site feedback and ideas, please join us on the For the Love of Ravelry forum. We hope to see you there.

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

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THE KNITTING GUILD ASSOCIATION

BY ARENDA HOLLADAY, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

TKGA
THE KNITTING GUILD ASSOCIATION

A New Day for TKGA

When last I wrote, we were in the process of transitioning from an organization owned by a management company to an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit managed by volunteers. This process has been underway since April 2015, when we were given the news that the company would disband TKGA as of October 31 of that year. Since that time, we have accomplished much.

We have established a board and bylaws, which will ensure continuity for all of our members. We worked with the management company to transfer the TKGA name and domain to us. Last June, TKGA was formed as a non-profit corporation in the state of Texas and received 501(c)(3) status from the IRS, and we successfully raised funds to manage the organization until we had access to the money collected for membership and programs.

With the help of two IT contractors, we created our management systems from scratch. Dan Woodward at Urgensee built our membership system for us at no cost and coordinated

the system design that Software Allies implemented. The system enables us to track memberships, manage the Masters submissions, and communicate with members, designers, teachers and guilds.

In an ongoing effort to keep our membership informed, we began producing a monthly newsletter last September. The newsletters also allow us to provide other regular features such as member profiles, technical tips, guild information and even free patterns. (Subscribe to the newsletter at tkga.org.) In addition, we continued the publication of *Cast On* as a digital magazine. (The cost of the print edition proved to be prohibitive.) We are proud to say that all of the designs in the Winter 2016/17 issue were donated by the designers, who believe in what *Cast On* provides. We were able to pay the designers for their Spring 2017 submissions.

We have continued our Masters Knitting and Knitting Judges certification programs, and we are in the process of adding new programs: The Technical Editing certification program is in

development, and Sample/Test Knitting and Teacher certification programs have been proposed. We have evaluated the Master Knitting programs and made changes to keep them financially viable. Time limits for each program have been instituted to ensure that program costs (including postage reimbursement for volunteers who review the program) match postal and administrative fees.

We have expanded the curriculum of our correspondence courses and mini courses. In these courses, students enjoy direct contact with instructors and receive detailed evaluations of their work and concrete suggestions for ways to improve their skills.

None of these efforts would have been possible without the support of our membership. They have donated time and money, renewed their memberships and sent emails of encouragement to those of us who have worked on the project from day one. We can never thank you enough. You make all of the work we do worthwhile.

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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The New Chain Link Conference

The CGOA is moving forward with exciting changes, the foremost of which is our annual Chain Link conference—this year an all-crochet event—taking place July 26–29 at the Westin Chicago Northwest hotel. We are delighted to be returning to the Chicago area, a city with strong local guilds and where CGOA was founded in 1994.

CGOA members are a diverse reflection of today's crochet community. We are career women, parents, grandparents, teenagers, bloggers, designers and industry pros. Although we are reclaiming our original Chain Link conference name, we will continue to offer all of the recent popular events and are adding new activities as well:

- Full range of classes by well-regarded instructors, with plenty of options to fill four days and immerse yourself in crochet.
- Vibrant marketplace with booths offering yarn accessories and other products of interest.
- Design competition with more than \$5,000 in prize money donated by our sponsors.

- Master's Program pinning for those who have successfully demonstrated their skills and knowledge by completing 48 swatches and answering a series of thought-provoking questions.

- Exhibitor and attendee fashion shows on the marketplace floor and at the banquet.

- A Buddy Program, which helps first-time conference attendees navigate activities and make important contacts.

- Editor Meet-and-Greets, where aspiring designers can present their design concepts directly to book, magazine and yarn company representatives.

- Talk by curator of the Museum of Crochet at the University of Illinois, the only comprehensive archive of crochet.

- Banquet featuring the CGOA Jean Leinhauser Hall of Fame winner.

- The lounge area, a place for exciting crochet art, meeting with friends old and new, as well as a place for our chapters to take on our Warm Up America! Challenge.

Our board is committed to reaching out to

new members through as many media and retail outlets as we can. If you would like to see beginner or casual crocheters become hooked on the craft for life, help spread the word about the Chain Link conference in your own newsletter, blog, social media posts or even a store bulletin board. We are happy to provide graphic materials for you to use online or to post in your store. Simply email our executive director, Karen Knies, at kknies@offinger.com.

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 dedicated to these goals.

If you share in our mission, you are invited to become a part of our crochet community. We offer memberships to individuals, professionals and companies. For more information about the Crochet Guild of America and its programs, visit crochet.org or e-mail CGOA@offinger.com

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Class Act

Bringing in a guest instructor is good for business. Making sure the experience is a pleasant one for both teacher and students is even better. **BY DARYL BROWER**

At Loop yarn shop in Philadelphia, workshops given by guest instructors are a regular event. Co-owner Laura Singewald estimates the shop hosts six to eight workshop events in a year, and both instructors and customers walk away feeling warm and fuzzy about the experience. A successful event, she says, starts with good communication. Without it, both shop owner and instructor may have different visions of just how the event will run—and that's not good for anyone's bottom line.

Great Expectations

You're counting on a book signing and meet-and-greet with the teacher at no extra charge; she's happy to sign books but expects reasonable compensation. He's expecting a ride from the airport with a stop at the hotel to freshen up; you expect him to head straight from the tarmac to your shop via taxi. Failing to clarify what's expected by and from both parties can cause big trouble. To make sure both shop and instructor are on the same page, put the terms in writing.

"Most instructors have a contract that lays out what they require in terms of food, travel and teaching fees," says Singewald, noting that she also asks to see the class descriptions and materials lists beforehand. "Even if the instructor doesn't have a formal contract, a clear email communication of what is expected makes everyone feel more confident."

Designer Fiona Ellis agrees that planning in advance is key for both parties' comfort and confidence. "I really appreciate when I'm given all the details [for a workshop] ahead of time," she says. "It means knowing the exact start and end time, the number of students—expecting a class of 10 and arriving to a room of 20 can throw you off—who will be providing materials (students? the shop? me?), how large the room is and what's available in terms of audio and visual aids. Lack of prep from the store owner makes me nervous," Ellis admits. "I'm always worried that the students will think I'm the one who wasn't prepared."

If you are supplying materials for class, make sure they are exactly what the instructor asked for and that there's enough to go around. And if the instructor is arriving from out of town, it's a nice gesture to offer to print out class handouts. "Not having to bring handouts means I [have

room to] bring more samples," says Ellis.

If the visit requires an overnight stay, determine in advance who will pay for lodging and arrange the details. If you are doing the booking, there's no need to splurge on a five-star hotel, but you should arrange for a room in an establishment that you wouldn't object to staying in yourself. "We use a hotel that's within walking distance of our shop," says Singewald. "We're certain of the quality and the cost." Don't expect the instructor to bunk down with you, your staff members or your customers, no matter how nice the home. Instructors are professionals who need privacy, downtime and personal space.

On class day, it's important for the shop owner—or, at the very least, an experienced staffer—to

a student who hasn't caught the hint.

When it comes to socializing after hours with staff and students, some instructors are enthusiastic about the opportunity. "I have had some wonderful experiences, and I love it when I'm offered the chance to visit sights or be social," says Fiona Ellis. Others would prefer a little solitude after a long day of teaching. "It's nice to have some time when you're not expected to be 'on,'" explains designer Mary Jane Mucklestone.

To avoid awkwardness or hurt feelings, don't wait until right before or after class to extend a dinner invitation. Ask well ahead of the visit, and check in the day of to make sure the instructor is still up for the experience. Even social butterflies like Fiona Ellis appreciate what she calls a "get-

Gold Star Earners

Tips to ensure a smooth and successful event.

- **Plan ahead.** Don't expect an in-demand instructor to be available at a moment's notice. Most book their schedules months (sometimes more than a year) in advance. A three- to six-month lead time is well within the industry norm.
- **Mind the details.** Once a date for your event is confirmed, finalize a contract; at the very least, insist that the instructor confirm all details in writing.
- **Meal plan.** If the instructor will be procuring his or her own meals, offer a list of eateries in the area. "I'm usually so exhausted that venturing out in an unfamiliar location is daunting," says Mary Jane Mucklestone. "It's nice to have suggestions."
- **Check your work.** Reconfirm details and expectations a week prior to the event.
- **Room monitor.** Make sure the shop owner, manager or a reliable staff member regularly checks in during the class. "If possible, we take the class as well," says Singewald.
- **Extra credit.** Remember to say thank you. A gift isn't necessary, but it is appreciated. "I get little gifts all the time and love them all," says Fiona Ellis. "My favorite was a doorstop that looks like the Wicked Witch's legs in striped stockings and ruby slippers, which I got from a guild in Kansas."

be on hand to greet the instructor and help get him or her settled. "We treat [the teacher] like a guest," says Singewald. "That means providing food, drinks and support. They aren't going to be at their best if they're hungry, thirsty and anxious," she explains. "That leads to unhappy customers, and no one wants that."

Social Studies

Knitters love talking to other knitters, so the temptation to stay and swap stories with the instructor is strong. But at some point the room has to clear. Don't put the onus of telling a student it's time to go on the instructor. A staff member should nudge

out" clause. Most of all, don't promise your customers an evening out with the instructor unless it has been confirmed well in advance.

Remember, teaching a workshop or at a retreat isn't a favor for your shop or a paid vacation for the instructor. Instructors aren't being divas when they ask for reasonable accommodations and fair pay. "An instructor who has a good experience is more likely to return and to recommend your shop to other instructors," says Singewald.

Daryl Brower, a New Jersey-based freelance writer, is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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Diversify With Weaving

Stores that offer a wide selection of products do better overall. Consider adding weaving to your shop's mix.

BY JANE PATRICK

In YMN's State of the Industry Report, Sven Risom of North Light Horizons offered helpful advice to shops based on a survey that separated high-performing shops from low performers. A key to high-performing stores' success, according to the survey, is diversification. These shops reported that sales of weaving and spinning products were up 20 percent in 2016 over the previous year.

In the 2016 TNNA State of the Specialty Needle-arts Retailer Survey, shops stated that in 2015, sales of weaving tools increased by 55 percent, spinning fiber by 44 percent and spinning tools by 33 percent. Recently, the Association for Creative Industries reported trends from the Creativation Show (formerly the Craft and Hobby Association Mega Show). Of particular note for bricks-and-mortar stores is the uptick in education. Classes geared around a project

offering your customers yet another way to be creative. You're also creating an opportunity to sell new kinds of classes, equipment and books, not to mention more yarn. I spoke with a few shops about how and why they started their weaving programs. They confirmed what I have learned over 20 years of working with yarn stores as an equipment manufacturer.

The first thing you must do to be successful is to educate yourself, which will help you design or implement a strong class schedule. Without it, your new category will languish. Heidi Sunday of Mobile Yarn in Mobile, Alabama, opened her shop in November 2015; she had taken a weaving class from a well-known teacher who then helped her design her shop classes. Sunday offers a weaving class every month. The students pay for a three-hour class, materials and a two-week loom rental.

sale of classes, yarn, equipment and books. According to the shop's education director, Rhonda Fagnoli, shops should first look for a knowledgeable teacher who encourages students to be successful, then design classes that are both value-friendly and user-friendly. Says Fagnoli, "Affordable classes are critical as an entrée into the craft. The class is the beginning of the relationship that leads to yarn, equipment and book purchases." In the first class, students work with a warped loom.

They take the loom home for the week and return with a finished piece. They learn to warp the loom in the second class and hone their skills in the third.

One aspect of Fagnoli's job is to create kits for the store, and she has found that kits for weaving in particular help sell bits of expensive materials along with yarns that aren't moving. She can create a beautiful project that inspires while moving yarns that aren't selling well to hand knitters. To support new weavers, the shop offers a once-a-month drop-in time during which customers (who pay \$10) can bring in their looms, ask questions, and get help. Each session lasts 90 minutes.

Give It a Try

Liz Gipson, founder of Yarnworker, is a teacher, blogger and publisher. She suggests that shops try out a number of different looms before making any final decisions about classes and which products to sell. She has noticed that the "boho aesthetic" trend has led to an increased interest in frame looms. "Even yarn shops with very little space can stock them, and you can package yarns that aren't moving to create kits. There is also good pattern support available," she notes.

If you decide to take the leap, begin with rigid heddle, frame and pin looms. They are the easiest for you and your customers to learn on and the most affordable to stock. Rigid heddle looms in particular are excellent for knitting yarns. Offering wall-hanging classes on frame looms will capture the latest style in fuzzy, textured weaving.

Diversification in your shop helps your customer find the craft they are most passionate about. They may start out as knitters but find they love weaving just as much. Likewise, a weaver could become a passionate knitter. Whatever their preference, they will need yarn. And you'll be there to sell it to them.

Jane Patrick, creative director for Schacht Spindle Company, is also a teacher, lecturer and author of *The Weaver's Idea Book*. She lives in Boulder, Colorado.

Getting Started

1. Identify a leader. The shop owner or an enthusiastic staffer would be a good choice. Ideally, this person will already know how to weave, but if not, there are countless resources available both off- and online. When choosing a leader, consider that this person could also become the teacher of your weaving classes.

2. Explore with intention. I recommend that the leader spend several months exploring weaving in an intentional way. Perhaps during this period he or she can create shop samples with yarns you always stock.

3. Order inventory. Once you decide what kind of weaving you want to teach—rigid heddle or frame loom—order your inventory. You'll need a display loom as well as looms and necessary accessories for your first class.

4. Develop your curriculum. Write up lesson plans. What do you want your students to learn, and what products do you want to sell to them?

5. Advertise. Through your newsletter, social media, counter sign, class samples and announcements at shop events, let people know about your beginning weaving classes.

6. Support your weavers. You know your classes are a success if your students are excited, because if they are, they will buy a loom, more yarn and books. Offering a help time and adding a maker night will promote cross crafting and keep enthusiasm high.

or technique help bring customers into the shop as well as move inventory.

What these reports indicate is that by diversifying your shop offerings, your business has more opportunity to thrive. Weaving is a natural inventory addition because it also sells yarn, something you already stock.

Learn the Ropes

If you think you're abandoning knitting and crochet by adding weaving supplies, think again. You're

They take their warped loom home to finish weaving off the scarf. At the end of the two weeks, the students can return the loom or purchase it (the rental fee is applied to the cost). Sunday has many woven samples in her store, which she believes are important for inspiration. Going forward, to further expand class options, she plans to offer two-hour private lessons with a purchase of a loom.

Makers' Mercantile in Kent, Washington, also developed an education program, because in their experience, such a program directly impacts the



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The Siren Song of Scarcity

Scarcity is a very powerful motivator. Thankfully for retailers, indie dyers and yarn companies of all sizes, knitters are not immune. In fact, we seek it out. BY AMY SINGER

The purpose of scarcity, whether it's real or not, is to make a product seem more desirable so that even the worst procrastinators feel compelled to make a purchase," Christina Desmarais said in an inc.com article entitled "How to Use Scarcity to Fuel Sales." This concept has a growing place in the knitting industry.

Not everyone is in a position to order an entire bale of wool, as Clara Parkes of Knitter's Review and Clara Yarn did, or has the time to build relationships with sheep farmers and spinning mills. But there are quite a few things that savvy retailers have done to help them stand out from the competition.

One of the simplest ways to bring a unique limited-edition product to your shop is to commission it. In Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, Harps & Thistles Yarn Emporium owner Cindy Michael has commissioned several colorways from indie dyer Three Irish Girls that are sold exclusively at her shop. To promote customer involvement, the store runs contests asking for photos to be used as inspiration for the next colorway. The winning photo is chosen by vote, and then Three Irish Girls "work their magic," says Michael. "The winner gets naming rights to the colorway and a free skein of yarn."

To find indie dyers in your area, visit etsy.com. Search "hand-dyed yarn" and you'll find hundreds of artisans throughout North America and beyond. Be sure to check their longevity and ratings—you'll want experienced hands dyeing your yarn. Mid-sized independent companies like Lorna's Laces and Blue Moon Fiber Arts can be wonderful partners in a custom-dyed-yarn project as well, and they have the chops to deliver what they've promised.

The Yarnery in St. Paul, Minnesota, orders custom colorways and even commissions specially spun yarns to fill a void in its product lineup. According to owners Shelly Sheehan and Scott Rohr, "Our customers like things that are different or unique—things they can't find everywhere. It's our version of a souvenir."

Sourcing Scarcity

North America is home to several mills that are ready to take custom spinning orders as small as 2 pounds. Still River Fiber Mill in Eastford, Connecticut, Spinderellas Creations in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Custom Woolen Mills outside Carstairs, Al-

berta, have made it easier for shop owners to go beyond color and create unique yarn bases suited to their particular clientele.

Webs of Northampton, Massachusetts, has offered its own yarn line, Valley Yarns, for years. Says co-owner Steve Elkins, "It fills a need in the market for reasonably priced, very high quality basics. From our other suppliers, we look for exclusives to provide us with fresh and new products or designs that drive excitement and new business for us. We don't want to promote purely on price, and exclusive products allow us to market in a different way than our competitors."

Like Ysolda Teague's shop (see "Scarce by Design," right), Elkins has found that kits are a great way to satisfy consumer demand. "Most consumers aren't color experts, so they are expecting us to be the experts," he says. "Once they zero in on a project, they want us to make it easy for them. Operationally, [kits] make it easier and actually cheaper, because there is less of an investment in inventory and it is easier to pick and pack."

Whatever unique product you choose to offer, strong promotion is the key to success. Consider a knit-along to tie in with the product you're offering. Many retailers agree that email blasts and social media help them get the message out to their customers.

Getting your customers involved in your exclusives from the beginning gets them invested in the process and excited to own the final product. In Lancashire, England, Kate Makin started her company Northern Yarn to "see how local I could get. I decided to have my own wool spun from a friend's flock of Poll Dorsets just down the road." Makin blogged the entire process, from shearing to mill, and watched customer excitement build in the lead-up to the launch.

Knitters hate to miss out, social-media-connected knitters doubly so. The acronym FOMO (fear of missing out) could easily have been coined by a knitter. But as Clara Parkes suggests, retailers would do well to treat scarcity as a marketing tool as you would a very, very sharp knife: "Respect it as a powerful and effective tool, but use it very carefully and only when it's absolutely merited. If what you do is truly unique, if every instance is truly different and special, then absolutely that rarity should be touted."

Scarce by Design

In the past few years, we've seen the emergence of knitterati-run small-batch yarn companies that embrace the concept of scarcity. Author and acknowledged yarn expert Clara Parkes was part of this movement when she started her Clara Yarn company in 2014. It began with an experiment that her readers could follow online and culminated in yarn they could buy. And when the resulting yarn was gone, there would be no more.

Parkes called her first endeavor the Great White Bale, and it was the buzz of the knitternet for months. Run as a pre-sale to finance the project, the first batch of yarn sold out in just a few days. Of the 20 products Parkes has since listed as finished-product releases, every single one has sold out within 36 hours, often much more quickly.

Ysolda Teague has also entered the small-batch yarn business with her Blend No.1, a locally sourced worsted-spun 3-ply, offered undyed. Along with select kitted Jamieson & Smith colorway packs and a custom-dyed kit from La Bien Aimée in Paris, it makes up a tightly curated offering of yarns specifically chosen to work with a selection of her patterns.

Jill Draper has been designing her own U.S.-made yarn from fiber to finished product since 2005, first with her own handspun, later with yarn sourced and milled in the U.S., then dyed by her own hands. Once her supply flocks are down to their skivvies, there won't be more yarn 'til the next season. However, Draper doesn't focus on the limited-edition nature of the yarns she produces in her marketing. In her case, scarcity is caused by demand outpacing supply combined with the long lead time required to manufacture her stock. But fans of her work are quite aware that when Draper's last oversized skein of Empire is sold out, there will be a long wait for the next one.

Amy Singer is the editor of the largest, longest-running online knitting magazine, Knitty.com. She knits and writes in Toronto.

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Letting Go

How to fire an employee without repercussions. BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Having to let an employee go is one of the worst duties associated with being a boss. Worse yet, doing so means you face the risk that a disgruntled ex-worker will make legal claims against you. Minimize that risk by ending an employee relationship smoothly and without recriminations.

Status Conscious

Are you dealing with an employee or an independent contractor? If the person in question receives a regular paycheck with federal, state and local taxes withheld, does tasks you specify at your place of business, and does work that is largely under your control, then that individual is likely to be an employee. If the person receives project-based payments rather than regular wages (without any withholding), works when and wherever she wants to and controls the way she completes projects (including purchasing supplies), then that individual is likely to be an independent contractor.

Why does the distinction matter? The nature of the working relationship will affect when and how you can terminate that relationship. If you're dealing with an independent contractor, you can't simply announce "I'm out!" and end your dealings there. Your relationship is, as the name suggests, governed by a contract. Start by reviewing the document. Does it include a provision discussing how and when you can terminate the work? You may be required to provide some sort of notice and possibly give the contractor a chance to fix any problems before you can terminate your obligations. Make sure you have spe-

cific and objective reasons to support your decision: "You haven't finished the work on time" or "you exceeded the budget," rather than "I'm just not happy with the work."

At Will Doctrine

If you are dealing with an employee instead of an independent contractor, you have much greater flexibility. The reason: a longstanding American legal doctrine called "employment at will," which means the vast majority of employees can be fired for any reason, at any time.

If you have a written employment contract with the employee, determine if there are provisions relating to termination. You'll also need to check for any specific laws imposing additional constraints. Many jurisdictions have statutes that prohibit an employer from firing an employee for reasons based on race, gender, religion, age, pregnancy or disability. Some jurisdictions have laws protecting employees from being fired based on sexual orientation, genetic makeup or other characteristics. A handful of states also hold employers to a general standard of good faith, giving an employee the right to sue if he or she deems the firing to be unfair. Make sure you know all federal, state and local laws that apply to you and your business.

Having the Talk

Although you may dread it, experts agree that it is best to deliver news face to face. Plan what you will say, including a simple explanation of why you believe that firing is necessary. If the reasons are purely economic, be honest. If you are firing the

employee because of behavior, be prepared to explain why you believe the conduct merits dismissal. Give specific reasons, like chronic lateness or speaking disrespectfully to customers, instead of vague phrases like "It's not working out." Keep your tone unemotional and factual. Consider asking a third party to attend the meeting; this person can help defuse tension and provide an accurate report of exactly what was said should the fired employee later claim that you made promises or admissions of wrongdoing.

Sweetening the Pot

It's never a bad idea to offer a spoonful of sugar to accompany the pill of termination. If you're letting an employee go based solely on economics, offer to write a recommendation or to provide a reference. If you're not ending the relationship on good terms, consider offering her some type of compensation in exchange for a written release. In a typical release, the terminated employee agrees to give up certain legal rights (i.e., the right to sue for wrongful termination) in exchange for some benefit. Larger employers may offer extra severance pay. Decide whether it's worth offering a lump sum or a week's pay in exchange for a release to avoid any risk of future claims being made against you.

Toting It All Up

Most states have statutes that are designed to protect employees from unscrupulous employers. Often called wage-payment laws, these statutes prohibit employers from withholding wages for hours that have already been worked. That means you must pay accrued wages to workers even if the employment relationship ended badly, if you believe the employee caused loss or damage to your business or if the employee quits without warning. Wage-payment laws often impose serious penalties on employers who violate them, so when an employee leaves, make sure you pay up in accordance with state law.

By addressing issues as they arise, you can minimize the risk that a simple employee termination will turn into a messy wrongful-termination claim. Seek the advice of an licensed attorney should you need additional information.

Plan, Plan, Plan

When hiring, consider putting the offer of employment in a letter or email, including the job title and important details like the number of hours per week, hourly wage and the employee's duties and responsibilities. Establish agreement in advance on who owns the rights to patterns, classes and other intellectual property. You'll be glad to have things in writing should issues regarding the employee's performance arise later. Other ways to plan ahead:

- **Write everything down.** If an employee starts to show up late, document each instance with an email to the employee, as well as in a journal entry or list.
- **Create an employee handbook** that sets out the rules that apply to everyone.
- **Treat employees consistently.** Playing favorites or letting non-compliance slide will get you in trouble if you eventually need to terminate someone for violating the rules.
- **Give the employee prompt feedback** if an she does something wrong, then give her a chance to improve her performance. But be sure to document all transgressions for later reference.

Carol J. Sulcoski is an attorney in Philadelphia; she is also an author, teacher, dyer and knitwear designer.




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RETAIL PROFILE

BY DARYL BROWER

Bella Filati

Knitters are a social sort. That's one of the things Holly Floyd discovered when she began working at Bella Filati, the Southern Pines, North Carolina, shop founded by Allison McLean in 2004.

The store, located just 10 minutes from the popular golf resort town of Pinehurst, is a social hub for a strong community of crafters, and Floyd found herself warmly welcomed into the fold. "I loved being in the store," she says. Two years after Floyd joined the Bella Filati staff, McLean asked her if she'd be interested in becoming a partner in the shop. Six months later, when McLean decided to move on, Floyd took over as owner. "I haven't looked back," she says. "This is where I belong."

It's a nice place to be. Founded in 1884, the town of Southern Pines is a pretty place, blessed with lovely weather, picturesque buildings and lots of foot traffic. "It's a busy and viable town filled with shops and restaurants," says Floyd, who bought the building next door to the original shop in 2007, moving the store to its current light-filled corner location. "We are very fortunate to live in such a great place." And while great location no doubt plays a role in Bella Filati's success, it's Floyd's carefully culled collection of up-end yarns and the endless inspiration and encouragement she and her staff provide that keep customers—both locals and tourists—coming through the doors.

"We carry high-quality yarns," explains Floyd. Blonde-wood bins filled with Malabrigo, Classic Elite, Noro, Dragonfly Fibers and more are supplemented with trunk-show offerings (Cutthroat, Molly Girl and Anzula are among the most recent). Luxury fibers, hand-dyes and local sheep-to-yarn offerings are the bulk of the inventory, but Floyd keeps lower-price-point skeins in stock as well. "The only other [yarn sources] in town are Michaels and Hobby Lobby," she says. "I try very hard to keep a range of yarns that will satisfy the afghan knitter/crocheter and the

adventuresome Ravelry knitter and crocheter."

Classes, offered at all times, cover a wide variety of topics and skills—everything from basic learn-to-knit or crochet sessions to more in-depth techniques. For \$15, customers can join regular two-hour sessions with the "Help Doctor," a skilled staffer who offers hands-on aid and advice for works in progress; private lessons are also available at \$35 per hour to help customers master a particular technique or navigate a tricky pattern. Customers of all skill levels flock to the Social Knitting sessions, which are held three times a week: Tuesday mornings, Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons. These are free gatherings during which customers come to stitch and socialize, sharing advice on knitting, crochet and life in general. "They're a very important part of [our customers'] week and their lives," says Floyd. "Their craft is the catalyst that brought them together, but sharing this time has bonded them beyond Bella Filati's doors."

Bella Filati offers plenty of opportunity for customers to work together. In 2011 and 2013, more than 30 of them helped the shop staff yarn-bomb the trees on both sides of Southern Pine's main street. "We had a blast," says Floyd. "The townsfolk are still talking about it." The core group of clients that make up the Social Knitting circles are also reliably on hand for Bella Filati's other activities: monthly Bingo games; the annual customer showcase; and the many charity projects the store undertakes. These include helmet liners for the military, blankets for Project Linus, knits for newborns, and knitted "knockers" for those who've undergone mastectomies. Every winter the shop strings a double clothesline outside the store window and customers clip mittens, scarves and hats to it along with a note that reads "If you have one, leave one; if you need one, take one." "It fills and empties weekly," says Floyd.

Another popular project is the now-annual Yarn Amnesty, which began with an emailed request to Floyd's database of close to 3,000 crafters in 2015. "I asked them to bring in any yarn (whole or partial balls), needles, hooks or even fabric that they know they'll never use," Floyd explains. The shop collects items for two to three weeks, giving each customer who donates items a \$25 credit punch on their rewards card. The donations are sorted, bagged and delivered to a women's prison. Last year the bags more than filled the back of a pickup truck. The inmates use the still-lovely yarn to

make prayer shawls for churches, stuffed animals for the needy, and more. "It's a win-win situation for all involved," says Floyd. "The customers empty out their stashes—so they can buy more!—and the prisoners have an opportunity to knit, crochet or sew with beautiful materials."

Less altruistic but equally enjoyable projects also keep customers engaged and inspired. Before the holiday season, Bella Filati staff (nicknamed the Bella Babes) design one- and two-skein projects that are printed up into pattern leaflets, dubbed Quick Knits, that retail for \$2.50. "They give customers some easy and fun ideas for gifts," explains Floyd. "We all look forward to the Quick Knits big reveal night with much anticipation."

There's a lot going on in a given day at Bella Filati, and Floyd credits her part-time staff of six for helping her pull it off. "They are a great cross-section of women, ranging in age from 30 to 60, each with her special talents and interests," she says. "And I am all about delegation: They're all empowered to create, suggest, order and post on social media." They're also singularly focused on great service, something Floyd says is the real key to the shop's ongoing success. "We are all willing to help with problems, save a dropped stitch, substitute yarns, find patterns to go with a favorite yarn—and most importantly listen to our customers' stories, whether about knitting or just about life," she says. "Bella Filati is a community."

Bella Filati Luxury Yarns

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COMPANY PROFILE

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

Cascade Yarns

trends in color and texture will come and go, but peek into any knitter's stash and you're likely to find Cascade yarns, probably Cascade 220. Being a project essential has always been the company's goal, says creative director Shannon Dunbabin. "We focus on basics and value," she says. "We work on finding yarns that are going to be staples, that are good knitting and crocheting yarns. Our Cascade 220 yarns have been around for 20-plus years, for example."

Cascade Yarns was launched in Seattle by Bob Dunbabin, Shannon's father-in-law, in 1987. The company is now located just outside the city, in Renton, Washington. Shannon joined the company in 2003, and her husband, Rob, now vice president and manager of sales, came on-board full time in 2005. With the exception of an Italian line of wool yarns, Borgo de'Pazzi, which the company distributes, Cascade is a wholesaler that focuses on its own lines.

Its yarns are manufactured in a handful of countries—Peru, Bolivia, China, India and Brazil, among them. "Rob and I have very close, personal relationships with our mills," Shannon Dunbabin says. Before committing to a working relationship, Cascade ensures that the mills meet a number of conditions, including quality control and employee treatment. "We look for good quality, good colors, consistent spinning,



good equipment and happy workers," Dunbabin says. "We work with the same mills over and over again. Once we find a good mill, we don't like to switch."

Where the company is open to making changes is in its marketing initiatives. Wholesalers traditionally have no direct interaction with end users, but thanks to social media, Cascade is able to connect with knitters from around the world

via an array of channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Ravelry. But Dunbabin says that there are minuses that match—and sometimes outweigh—the pluses of digital advancements.

"Mobile devices have presented a real challenge [to the knitting industry] because people are spending so much time on their phones and tablets," she says. "I know that other hobbies have complained as well about people having less spare time because they're [texting and surfing the Web] instead of making."

As a way to combat this trend, she points to news articles that extol the virtues of unplugging from devices and reconnecting with a favorite hobby. "Spending time knitting or crocheting is usually something people can do without staring at a screen. You're actually making something and getting some downtime, and a lot of people need that time away from social media," she says.

Beyond sharing information and interacting with knitters via digital initiatives, the company has placed a priority on face-to-face interactions. While Cascade Yarns has customers overseas, the bulk of its business is conducted in the United States, and its sales team takes advantage of this proximity.

Though it still attends select consumer shows, Cascade reined in its time spent at trade shows five years ago and redistributed the marketing budget to allow its half-dozen sales representatives to head out on the road, visiting local yarn shops and interacting with store owners and customers. "It allows us to work with all shops versus just the ones that go to a particular trade show," Dunbabin says. She estimates that a number of the sales reps do as many as 30 visits a year, and Dunbabin herself leads from five to 20 per year.

The Cascade team calls these store visits "yarn tastings." "It's a big event in a shop, and very shop-centric," Dunbabin explains. "We're focusing on promoting local yarn stores and giving them a chance to sample local products. And it's a chance [for us] to visit with the end consumers to find out what they like and what they don't like and to see what they're working on. I love doing those events; they're a lot of fun. We pro-



Address: 813 Thomas Ave. SW,
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Employees: 18

Fun fact: In October 2017, Cascade Yarns will be partnering with Cocoa Village, Florida, yarn shop Knit and Stitch Boutique on a Caribbean knitting cruise. Guests include StevenBe and Rebecca Combs, and over the duration of the eight-day trip, the ship will port in Jamaica and Mexico among other sunny destinations. Cascade has designed a custom color and shawl pattern specifically with the journey in mind.

vide the yarns for the store, as well as door prizes, so all the stores have to worry about is providing the venue and the refreshments."

Another marketing initiative is Cascade's Knitterati Afghan project. The knit-along—launched in celebration of the company's 30th anniversary—involves the making of 30 10-inch squares created by 30 well-know designers, among them Deborah Newton, Melissa Leapman, Amy Herzog and Susan B. Anderson, which are being released every few weeks throughout the year. "It's a great way to try a new technique, and it's a very portable project. It's also doable in a reasonable amount of time," Dunbabin says. "This is the first really big knit-along we've done, and we're pleasantly surprised at just how well it's going."

Knitters can get pattern links and codes for all the squares for free by signing up for the company's newsletter, but the patterns are also available for purchase; all the money raised from sales of the squares will be donated to charity.

"We're currently working with Haiti Babi [which provides jobs to mothers in Haiti so they can earn a sustainable living wage], but we will be working with Halos of Hope later this year. We're planning to direct proceeds from each group of five blocks to a different fiber-related charity," Dunbabin says.



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Statistics and data-gathering tell us much about social media. They tell us, in Capital One's Spark Business recent survey of small business owners, that social media is viewed by most small businesses as an opportunity—and that 61 percent use social sites as a business tool. The data gathered by the Pew Research Center (PRC) shows a dramatic increase in users: When it started tracking social media use in 2005, just 5 percent of American adults used at least one platform. Today, that number has risen to 69 percent.

What has changed over time, according to the PRC, is that the user base is now remarkably representative of the broader U.S. population. Sure, social media adopters were young at the beginning, but older Americans are playing catch-up.

People 50–64 years old increased their use from 4 percent to 64 percent in 10 years; ages 65+ went from 3 percent to 34 percent. In 2005, men slightly edged out women in social media usage, but in 2016, 72 percent of women were users while 66 percent were men. In 2005, social media use appealed evenly to all income levels. Today, social media attracts the most users with income levels of \$75,000+ (78 percent). As for education levels, college graduates have led the way, from 10 percent in 2005 to today's 78 percent. Ten years ago, urban populations enjoyed a slight edge (6 percent) over suburban (5 percent), with rural trailing (3 percent). Today, suburban locations lead with 71 percent, while urban is 69 percent and rural is at 60 percent.

Ironically, while social media usage is recognized as increasingly important, only 56 percent of the businesses surveyed by Capital One have websites and only one half have optimized their sites for mobile. A mere 23 percent of small businesses have set up their websites for

e-commerce. The data is clear: Small businesses prefer using social media to websites to digitally find, follow and engage with their customers, and developing expertise with them is of paramount importance. Let's look at the numbers.

FACEBOOK

According to the Pew Research Center, "Facebook is the most widely used of the major social media platforms, and its user base is the most broadly representative of the population as a whole." To state it plainly, approximately eight in 10 Americans who are online use the platform. Facebook's penetration of the total American population, online and offline, is an astounding 68 percent.

Contrary to Facebook's naysayers, young adults have not been lured away from the platform: a full 88 percent are 18–29 years old. Equally interesting, Facebook's most recent growth is attributed to the rise in usage by Americans 65+; some 62 percent of them are now using the platform. Women edged out men by two percentage points. As for the rest of the available demographics, college-educated leads over high school, incomes are \$75,000+ and urban locations prevail. Of these users, approximately 75 percent log in at least once a day. Toss in weekly, and the number climbs to more than 90 percent.

How to best use Facebook? Video, from status updates to live broadcasting to immersive 360-degree experiences. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has boldly declared, "In five years, most of Facebook will be video."

Facebook users have shown a preference for video posts to any other post type (text, photo, link) for a status update, with 135 percent greater organic reach than photo posts, the next favored. Unfortunately,

INTERNET INTERACTIONS

By Mary McGurn



your video post will be one of eight billion videos served up daily on the platform. Your challenge will be to create videos that connect with your customers, not by selling product but by emphasizing authentic, personal connections. If you create these types of videos, you'll win reach and increase your opportunity to convert.

Facebook Live was publicly released on Facebook mobile in December 2015, allowing individuals to broadcast live to family and friends. In 2016, the same mobile-based capability was added to Business Pages and Groups. Earlier this year, Facebook rolled out Facebook Live for desktop. Spontaneous, raw, interactive, intimate—these live-streaming attributes do much to explain why Facebook Live is enjoying such phenomenal popularity and engagement among users. It's also why Facebook made a change to its News Feed algorithm to rank live broadcasts higher.

So grab your smartphone and film behind-the-scenes moments, introductions to your team, product launches, company tours, company milestones, Q&As, how-tos, interviews and events as content. Days ahead, publish posts to announce your live broadcast. Set your live broadcast up as a Facebook event and send invites. When live, remember to ask users to subscribe to your future broadcasts. Use the archived broadcasts in Facebook ads and cross-promote them on your other digital channels.

The newest form of video on Facebook is 360-degree, giving viewers an interactive and immersive experience beyond merely watching. Turning their device or dragging a finger around the video lets them explore every angle. It can be viewed as a Virtual Reality experience with an Oculus Rift device. A special icon alerts Facebook users that a video is 360-degree. Use of 360-degree video is in its infancy, since it requires a special camera, but until then, you can upload and share 360-degree

photos to Facebook with panoramas taken on your smartphone, or use a 360-degree photo app.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a distant second to Facebook, accounting for 32 percent of Americans online. Young adults use Instagram to a far greater degree than other social platforms, including Snapchat. Approximately six in 10 online adults ages 18–29 (59 percent) use it, followed by 30–49-year-olds (33 percent). Older adults avoid Instagram: Only 13 percent of those ages 50–64 use it, and 65+ even less (5 percent). Online women (32 percent) use the platform more than men (23 percent). Instagrammers are primarily college-educated; income levels are evenly spread, from less than \$30,000 to 75,000+, and urban locations prevail.

As to frequency of use, 51 percent use Instagram daily. Another 26 percent use it weekly. Here's another way to appreciate this photo-sharing app's usage: Since Instagram's launch in 2010, more than 40 billion photos have been shared—that's four times more photos than there are humans on Earth.

Stories and Live Video are the savvy business owner's best bets for using Instagram. Given Facebook's ownership of the platform, look for the two to continue copying and re-fitting each other's popular features to their respective platforms.

In August 2016, Instagram introduced Stories, a move seen as mimicking Snapchat. Within two months, use of Stories surpassed 100 million daily active users. Once you're in the Stories tab, you can capture photos and videos with Instagram's camera, or upload them from the last 24 hours of media stored in your photo library. (Facebook is poised to replicate Instagram Stories as an addition to users' mobile News Feeds.) *(continued on page 47)*

Create videos that connect with your customers, not by selling product but by emphasizing personal connections.



NEVER ENOUGH NEEDLEWORKERS

How to make new needle artists in a busy world.

Surveys show that there are multiple millions of knitters in the U.S.: According to the most recent numbers from the Association for Creative Industries (formerly the Craft and Hobby Association), the nation harbors more than 26 million knitters and crocheters. The Craft Yarn Council estimates that more than 50 million people knit, crochet or craft with yarn. TNNA's report, the State of the Specialty NeedleArts 2016, puts the number of needlearts participants between 27 and 57 million adults.

Though these numbers are significant, if the estimates are correct, only about 10 percent of the American public has amassed any kind of hand-stitchery skill, leaving the vast majority unschooled in the needlearts. To offer even more perspective, the TNNA report shows that "very passionate" practitioners across all categories number only one million or so. (The TNNA study defines "enthusiasts" as those in the top 2 to 5 percent of the market, who spend more than \$200 annually on fiber-arts supplies.)

Consider that number. It means that even with countless articles flooding the media touting the health benefits of crafting or showcasing celebrities wielding needles, there are still only about one million dyed-in-the-wool yarnies in the U.S. The assumption that one million faithful can keep an entire industry afloat isn't sustainable. Trends, the economy, life events and the constant busyness of 21st-century life conspire to prevent many from regularly practicing their crafts. So to maintain a constant flow of knitters and crocheters into yarn shops, the yarn industry must work to both engage less-active crafters and entice new ones.

"Of course we want people to learn how to knit," Arenda Holladay, president of the Knitting Guild Association, tartly observes. "We all fail if we don't bring in new people." But how do we do that?

Today it's easier than ever to learn to knit or crochet, even for people who have never visited a yarn shop. If one is so motivated, YouTube makes available countless free

videos that teach beginners everything from the Long-Tail Cast-On to 3-D crocheted leaves. Craftsy, Annie's Craft Store and CreativeLive sell introductory knitting and crochet classes online taught by top instructors. Public libraries, schools running after-hours programs and even churches offer classes as well.

According to conventional wisdom, most learn their needlearts skills from family members or friends. A 2015 survey conducted by the British company Wool and the Gang bears that out. Nearly 60 percent of the 4,000 respondents learned to knit from their "mums and grans," whereas 15 percent—"a new generation," according to WATG—taught themselves via YouTube. But will that trend continue?

Leanne Pressly, founder of Stitchcraft Marketing, taught her 14-year-old daughter to knit and sew but wonders whether other busy professionals not as engaged in needlecrafts will bother. "How do we—moms like me, who need to keep so many balls in the air—find the time? I knit every day, but lots of mothers are exhausted at day's end and don't have the time to teach."

Though the recent TNNA survey of knitting enthusiasts didn't ask the "how did you learn" question, it did ask the following: "Was there a period in your adult life when you stopped doing fiber arts for more than a year?" It turns out that for those who did stop, most did so in their twenties and thirties, busy life- and career-building years. When asked the follow-up question "Did any people or resources help you return to the fiber arts?" the vast majority cited friends, family members, other fiber artists or yarn shop staff as the catalysts.

Whether crafters are learning at mom's knee or not, the TNNA results shed light on the importance of human connections in perpetuating these crafts. Louet's Dave Van Stralen, president of TNNA, agrees and urges yarn shops to take a leadership role in cultivating stitchers by hosting events,

reaching out to their communities and generating enthusiasm. "It's the yarn store owner's responsibility to do this sort of thing."

The fact of the matter is this: In recent years, interest in knitting has flagged, while the popularity of crochet has grown. A look at Google Trends reveals that in 2010 crochet searches began outstripping knitting searches—and the gap has only grown wider. In its report, TNNA noted this disparity, urging: "Get Americans back to knitting and jump on crochet. Knitting has slipped while crochet has grown. Target adults in their forties and fifties. Encourage knitters to mentor a friend, relative or coworker. Mentoring is crucial! Offer excellent how-to and inspirational content where forty-somethings go for knitting help: Facebook and Ravelry, online videos and tutorials, and local yarn shop staff."

MAKING MAKERS

Nobody is leaving things up to chance. The handcraft yarn industry has always been deeply invested in the propagation of new knitters and crocheters and offers countless opportunities for the stitch curious. Whether it's the perennial Knitting 101 class taught in most yarn shops or national campaigns sponsored by industry groups, opportunities abound for newbies to learn how to twirl colorful yarn into something beautiful.

"People are always coming and going from the knitting community," explains Kris Porritt, co-owner of Cream City Yarn in Brookfield, Wisconsin. "If you're not making new knitters, you're not growing your community." Cream City Yarn offers an impressive curriculum designed to take students from garter stitch to lace and colorwork. The store schedules two sections of Novice Knitting each month, both of which fill up far in advance, meaning that every month the store educates at least 12 new knitters. All novice knitting students are encouraged to matriculate into a sock class or pick-your-project class, after which they can jump into knit-alongs and other more advanced

By Leslie Petrovski

classes. "Our hope," Porritt says, "is that all beginning knitting students will become lifelong customers."

In Austin, Texas, the yarn shop Gauge keeps its crop of knitters fresh by hosting weekly one-hour Learn to Knit and Learn to Crochet classes for \$10, materials included, as well as five weekly drop-in, open-forum classes for \$15, during which beginning stitchers can seek help on current projects. "We know that these classes are not huge [money earners]," said Karli Capps, co-owner of the vibrant shop. "But what would be the point if we didn't share knowledge? Everybody could be doing his or her learning and buying online. This is about community and people being people."

Yan Qian, owner of Forever Yarn in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, has a similarly expansive attitude about supporting beginners. The store offers regular beginning knitting classes but has a policy of helping all customers with their Forever Yarn projects during store hours at no charge. Plus, every Sunday from noon to 4 P.M., the store's staff and regular knitting group are on hand to assist knitters with any challenge. "Most shops want to call what we do a class. I never have, and I have no intention of ever doing so," Qian explains. "This is a community. We give out all this instruction, and students in turn help others to learn. It's tremendous."

Knit-alongs at Forever Yarn are also free and offered in the spirit that new projects and new techniques create enthusiasm, sell yarn and generate inspiring FOs. "You are not just selling yarn," Qian says. "You want to see the excitement echoed in the people who frequent your shop. That's the measurement of success. Seeing someone learn a technique and then turn around and help the next person—it's so cool. That's ultimately what's rewarding."

That being said, classes don't make sense for every shop. Located in touristy Cedar, Michigan, Wool and Honey attracts many of its customers during the summer months. Classes at this destination yarn shop have proved to be hit or miss. "We've tried evening classes, middle-of-the-day classes," says owner Liz Neddo.





NEVER ENOUGH...

celebrities such as Stephen West. "We try to keep things fresh and enticing," Neddo says. "We always have different shawls, knits for the holidays, big, chunky things that are the trend right now. Having projects that are more advanced encourages people to [grow their skills]."

JUMP ON THE BANDWAGON

It's not just yarn shops that are pushing the needlearts. Professional groups, trade associations and dedicated individuals have made a tremendous impact on boosting the crafts' public profile through initiatives such as Stitch 'N Pitch, Warm Up America! and World Wide Knit in Public Day.

Dave Van Stralen points to Spinzilla, TNNA's annual week-long spinathon, which pits teams worldwide against each other to see which can spin the most yarn. In 2016 Spinzilla spinsters spun more than 5.5 million yards. Entering its fifth year, Spinzilla has captured 1,500 to 2,000 new spinners, according to Van Stralen, and participating stores regularly see an increase in sales in the months and weeks prior to the October event. "The amount of product they're buying is enormous," he says. "The success of Spinzilla has encouraged other TNNA groups to look into adopting a similar

type of program for their own needlearts."

Fees from Spinzilla have the potential to make new makers, too. Spinzilla fees help fund the National NeedleArts Mentoring Program, which exposes youth to adult mentors who teach knitting, crochet, spinning and other disciplines. Though the program has been on a short hiatus, Van Stralen says that it's being revamped this year to help "introduce pre-teens and teens to fiber pursuits."

There's also TNNA's Needlearts Zones, which it sponsors at Maker Faires in California, Michigan and New York, staffed with volunteers teaching stitch crafts. In seven years, the association's volunteers have taught more than 23,000 people to knit, crochet, needlepoint or cross-stitch.

The Craft Yarn Council does its part by maintaining several learn-to-knit initiatives, among them Each One Teach Two, a pay-it-forward program that encourages knitters and crocheters to teach two people who teach two people and so forth, and I Love Yarn Day, which calls on yarn artists to spread the love on a given day in October.

Taking advantage of events like these is a way yarn shops can help build their customer bases. Gauge, for example, leveraged World Wide Knit in Public Day last year to help evangelize the craft. Billed as the largest knitter-run event in the world, WWKIP inspired more than 1,000 KIPs in 57 countries around the world in 2016. (This year, WWKIP takes place June 10.)

In honor of the event, the Austin-based yarn shop set up a booth outdoors at the Blanton Museum of Art, sending more than a dozen new stitchers home with free yarn and needles provided by Bryson Distributing and exposing their shop to countless passersby.

In the weeks leading up to the Women's March on Washington in January, yarn shops nationwide sold pink yarn by the mile and taught new stitchers how to make the hats that became a symbol of the event. Though there may never be another knit-hat moment like this one, fashion, sports and the arts all represent fiber for the mill to gin up interest in activities that bring people together to slow down, connect and learn something new.

"The needlearts are an opportunity to be creative, get together, bond and enjoy each other's company," Van Stralen said. "That's ultimately the reason why people are attracted. It's the camaraderie of knit nights, of simply hanging out at your local yarn shop. Shops that encourage people to spend time together are the ones thriving, because they are offering people a way to be part of a community."

"In bigger cities, you have a larger base to work with. We have a lot of retirees and it's hard to find that nice balance." Instead, Wool and Honey offers two-hour private lessons, which are easier to slot into vacationers' schedules. "It's been nice to do one-on-ones and mark a place in our schedule."

The store is also known for its inspirational knit-alongs (right now, the Hancock cardigan from Hannah Fettig's book *Home and Away* and Andrea Mowry's Find Your Fade shawl) and trunk shows (recently Brooklyn Tweed, with appearances by Jared Flood and Julie Hoover, and YOTH Yarns with Veronika Jobe), panel discussions and film screenings (in January, the slow-fashion documentary *The True Cost*), and guest appearances by

Teach someone a needleart and make a stitcher for life. Five ways to get them going:

- **Take advantage of established industry events** like Spinzilla, World Wide Knit in Public Day and Stitch 'N Pitch and host a tandem event for beginners or invite newbies along with the promise to help fix mistakes.
- **Connect to local colleges.** Resident assistants in dormitories are always looking for program ideas, as are student activities offices. If you're in a college town, hold a handful of college knit nights, teach some skills and be sure to have plenty of yarn in school colors on hand.
- **Refer knitters to online resources.** The human touch is key to making and retaining new stitchers. But when you're not available, the Internet is a gold mine of information for beginners who can't quite remember how to "knit through the back" once they leave your store. Choose instructional resources you trust.
- **Offer free help, if possible.** Yes, this is a bugaboo, especially during store hours. However, the only way to get people knitting and crocheting regularly is to help them through the rough spots. Host weekly knitting Rx nights and/or afternoons. Encourage newer knitters to join existing stitch groups at the store where they can receive mentoring from seasoned stitchers. Or choose patterns with strong pictorial or video support like those offered by Very Pink or Tin Can Knits.
- **Excite beginners with cool intermediate offerings.** If you already have a strong Knitting 101 program, enhance your curriculum with great advanced-beginner and intermediate offerings so nascent knitters aren't left stranded between simple hats and complicated lace shawls.

Stories are ephemeral—they're gone in a day. Stories that succeed are authentic, personal, immediate and unpolished, unlike the photos that rule Instagram's feed. Stories get noticed. They're placed at the top of followers' feeds and are highlighted in Instagram's Explore tab. Stories are a top-of-mind way to counter Instagram's Facebook-like algorithm. And now, Live broadcasting is part of Stories, but with a difference: They disappear once viewed. Though Stories are ephemeral, your Instagram business profile (business profiles rolled out mid-2016) will provide you with non-disappearing analytics on your Stories and your overall performance on the app.

Use the same content ideas suggested for Facebook Live. Be aware of Instagram's playtimes and trim if necessary: 3 to 60 seconds for clips and up to one hour when live-broadcasting. Strive to have more fun and to be offbeat with your content. Consider asking an Instagram influencer—individual or brand—to “take over” your Instagram account and have them create interactive Stories for you.

Instagram's blog said this about Stories: “With Instagram Stories, you don't have to worry about overposting. Instead, you can share as much as you want throughout the day, with as much creativity as your want.”

PINTEREST

Approximately three in 10 Americans with an online presence (31 percent) use Pinterest, the world's visual bookmarking tool for discovering and sharing ideas.

Since its beginnings in March 2010, Pinterest has overwhelmingly appealed to women. In 2016, pinners were 38 percent women and 15 percent men. It is most popular with ages 18–29 (36 percent), with 30–49-year-olds (32 percent) following closely behind. The age group 65+ uses the platform least (9 percent). Pinners are college-educated, earn \$75,000+ and live in the suburbs. About 25 percent pin daily and 31 percent pin weekly. What are they pinning? Food and drink, DIY and crafts, home décor, holidays and events in the greatest numbers.

Video is already infiltrating Pinterest and is poised to be the newest way to reach consumers on that platform. Pinners can already pin videos from other platforms, and native videos can now be pinned two ways: cinematic pins and promoted video. Cinematic pins move as a pinner scrolls through his or her feed, drawing the eye away from the static pins that surround it. Pinterest will roll out promoted videos up to 5 minutes long that work much like cinematic pins with the exceptions that they can be expanded, viewed in a new tab and shown with relevant, buyable products listed below.

Pinterest intends for pinners to see the platform as a competitor to Google in search, discovery and shopping. Since 2015, buyable pins have been letting pinners purchase on the platform's mobile app. Now those same purchases can happen on desktop. Buyable pins with a digital shopping bag (think shopping cart) will follow pinners from their desktops to their tablets to their smartphones.

Pinterest's Lens feature will turn you loose in the physical world of shopping to discover what you want and then let you find it on Pinterest without figuring out the right word or words by which to search it. It's enabled when you take a photo of an object with the camera in Pinterest's app.

Similar search and discovery can happen when pinners use Instant Ideas. Tapping on the circle icon under a pin will instantly unlock related pins that appear online and immediately reshape feeds. Shop the Look, another Pinterest tool, will let pinners track and buy products they see inside a pin. They'll either purchase on the platform or connect directly to brands working in partnership with Pinterest.

TWITTER

Twitter has apparently flatlined in user growth since 2015. Still, approximately one quarter (24 percent) of Americans online use the platform. Even though it's currently the fourth-most-popular social platform, the online buzz is that Snapchat will soon surpass it.

Twitter users are young: 36 percent are ages 18–29. Twitter is used least by ages 65+ (6 percent). Women and men use it equally; the college-educated use it twice as much as high school educated, and those with income levels of \$75,000+ lead. Urban and suburban locations are within 1 percent of each other. A not insignificant 42 percent of users tweet daily; another 24 percent tweet weekly. Daily users are primarily celebrities, athletes, journalists, politicians and brands providing customer service.

Twitter, too, considers video central to real-time conversations, so you can now upload videos that are, you guessed it, 140 seconds long. And Twitter makes tweeting videos easy. You can record, edit and share videos right from the Twitter app or import videos from your device. You don't even need to be on a mobile device: Twitter allows users to upload videos to the site via desktop. Not to be left out, Twitter is beta-testing live streaming through their app, Periscope. You'll see a

“go live” button on your smartphone as you compose your tweet; the button connects you to Periscope and enables broadcasting directly on Twitter. Also being tested through Periscope is live-streaming in 360 degrees.

Twitter's longer tweets arrived in the last half of 2016. The 140-character number is unchanged, but certain additions you make to your tweet will no longer count against this limit. These additions include photos, GIFs, videos,

quoted tweets and polls. Also not counted are the user names of people to whom you reply.

TAKEAWAYS

Marshall McLuhan, first father and leading prophet of the electronic age, coined the phrase, “The medium is the message.” Video, in the context of social media, fits the phrase. Video, as media, is embedding itself in the very message it transmits by directly affecting the message's perception. What every social media platform is telling its users is that video is your most effective way to communicate.

In 2015, PRC found that nearly 66 percent of Americans owned a smartphone and that their use of smartphones is rapidly broadening from voice calls, texting and getting directions to watching video. Even if you delay using video for social media, you'll still be catering your content to mobile screens and the behavior of smartphone users.

Video is content. In 2017, it's not product content that will win you engagement and conversions, but content that builds personal relationships and customizes experiences. Content will not come solely from the brand, but from shared user-generated content and influencers. Micro-influencers will be responsible for brands increasing their reach and gaining followers. Content will be served up in one-to-one messages between brands and their customers using messaging apps such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. To facilitate customer service, brands will use chatbots within these apps to respond to customers' queries in a question-and-answer format.

Social media is where “the only thing that is constant is change,” a prescient quote from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Social media is constantly changing and, at its best, enriches the lives of people who engage on its platforms. The goal is to keep up and keep changing, too.

Mary McGurn of McGurn Media creates, manages and strategizes social media accounts for small businesses and nonprofits and, as a photographer/videographer, creates visual stories for digital platforms.

Video, as media, is embedding
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After Westminster Fibers ceased distribution of Rowan, Sirdar stepped in to ensure an uninterrupted flow of yarn. The Rowan brand remains in good hands with longtime employee Sharon Brant, brand director and commercial director for the U.K. and U.S. markets. YMN's Erin Slonaker sat down with her to learn more about her and the future of the company.

YMN: Tell me about your path to this position.

SB: I've worked with Rowan for more than 20 years, and I've loved every minute of it. When I left college, I went to work in an international bank. I had a nice job, plus it was based in the City [in London], so it was fun after work, too. But after several years, I left to have a family, and I always knew I wouldn't go back. I loved being at home with my children and seeing them grow into individuals. I created a lot of knitwear while I was at home—I'd learned to knit as a child—and I started my own knitwear design business. Then one of my friends found an ad for a job requiring knitting experience in a local department store. It was for the brand Rowan. I thought that might be nice—a little part-time job. Little did I know it would turn into seven days a week, living and breathing what you do!

My job with Rowan moved on from teaching

knitting and selling the brand in the store to workshop coordinator, brand development manager, then account manager for the largest accounts in the U.K. I was lucky enough that my career grew at the same rate as my children: I find myself as brand director at a time when I have no children in the house.

I've had the most fantastic opportunities working with Rowan. I had the pleasure of being the technical support to Kaffe Fassett and Brandon Mably for a number of years. I've traveled to many countries, met some amazing people. My role as brand director is to allow Rowan to develop and grow as a brand, ensuring that it remains in knitters' lives for decades to come.

YMN: Rowan has always been strongly style-driven, with a stable of talented designers. Will those relationships continue?

SB: Very much so! We have our stable of signature designers: Martin Storey, Kaffe Fassett, Lisa Richardson, Sarah Hatton. We also work with collaborative designers including Kim Hargreaves, Marie Wallin and Brandon Mably—plus many more contributing designers around the world. We have a passion for seeking out new, young talent coming out of design schools. One of my loves is to help young people who have a clear talent—to give them guidance on how to grow in the knitting world. I find this very rewarding and one of the most enjoyable parts of my role.

YMN: How will Rowan be continuing its role as a consumer favorite?

SB: Having new owners opens your eyes to new ideas. I always felt that our offering was too large. It was difficult to sell, and it was difficult to buy from both a retailer and consumer point of view. We had too many yarns, which meant we didn't have enough supporting designs for all the yarns we carried. What we will do is continue to bring you beautiful designs for those most-loved yarns every season. We have streamlined our yarn range, but we have hugely increased the number of designs for each core yarn. The core range won't stay stagnant. We have three beautiful new yarns coming for Fall that I am sure our retailers and consumers will love. I'm not saying any more than that!

YMN: What trends do you see on the horizon that will impact the knitting industry?

SB: As a brand that isn't strongly trend driven, we will concentrate on bringing new inspirational design, styled and shown in an "of the moment" way. We are very much aware of how difficult

bricks-and-mortar selling has become. We will do everything we can to support our retailers in the times of changing purchasing habits.

YMN: What are your thoughts about the future of the knitting industry in general?

SB: I feel the future is strong. We have a great number of dedicated knitters who, I believe, will not move away from their passion. There's a lot of choice out there for them, so we have to concentrate on what we are doing as a brand and stay true to our values.

YMN: I heard you've knit for a few celebrities. Tell me more!

SB: I created knitwear for some amazing TV shows and films: *Harry Potter*, *Batman*, *Atonement*, *Phantom of the Opera* (my favorite). I had knit a garment for a lovely lady in the U.K., which she happened to be wearing as she was walking her dog. She lived next door to Pauline Quirk, who stars in TV dramas here. Pauline loved the sweater and asked me if I could make one for her, which I did. That led to more knitting for her personal wardrobe. When she was about to film a new drama, she asked her costume designer to contact me. I went on to create knitwear for her TV shows.

The costume department had many interns, and one of them got herself a job at Warner Brothers, with the *Harry Potter* team. They were looking for a knitter—somebody who could work with their ideas and create designs they could see in their minds. So I set about knitting things for them, which was so much fun. I always knit them myself—when something is that crazy, you have to see it develop and adjust as you go.

YMN: Who taught you to knit?

SB: I learned from my grandmother, who was always knitting, crocheting or sewing—I think every day. She used to make all of my costumes for dance shows and dress my dollies with the most amazing knitted wardrobes. I think of her when I make a mistake, remembering when she would take me through that process of having to undo something you had just spent hours making.

YMN: What's on the needles right now?

SB: A baby blanket for my first grandchild, who arrived on January 5.

YMN: What do you like to do that isn't knitting?

SB: I love walking my dog in the beautiful countryside, especially near the sea. But my priority is my family. Spending time with my mum and dad, my husband, my children and their lovely partners, and my new grandson.

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