



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

SHOW BUSINESS

TNNA debuts a new trade show format. Here's what to expect

IT'S ALIVE!

Why Facebook Live cannot be ignored

BUY, BUY BABY

Retail is dead; long live retail

JANUARY 2018

JOIN US
AT THE
**YMN
SUMMIT**
IN CHICAGO
(see page 3
for details)

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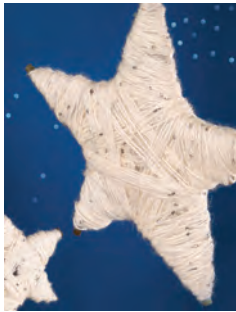


Elation



ROSE CALLAHAN

Going Viral



on the cover

HiKoo's sparkly, glimmering yarn, Tiara, adorns this wintry decoration. Skacel Collection distributes the 13 colors of the braided 10% kid mohair, 5% wool, 49% acrylic, 22% nylon, 10% bead, 4% sequin yarn. www.skacelknitting.com

Photograph by Marcus Tullis

Last October, my boyfriend was attending New York Comic Con with friends. He goes every year, and I've grown accustomed to not hearing a peep out of him as he takes in all that the show has to offer. But this year, I got a text. It was a photo of a man dressed like Batman. There was no accompanying explanation. I have no personal connection with Batman, so I wasn't sure why he'd sent it to me, but then I looked more closely at the photo. The man was wearing an entirely crocheted costume! So I put the photo up on *Yarn Market News's* Facebook page. (For those who saw it: yes, I pretended for the sake of a FB post that I took the photo myself.) I thought it was such a fantastic costume, and hoped I'd get some likes. Responses started rolling in, faster than I usually get on Facebook posts. A few people thought it gave crocheters a bad name. Several helpful fans put that person in her place, pointing out the impressive skill put into a well-thought-out costume.

I left to go to dinner. I noticed the number of people the post had reached was rapidly growing. As the evening went on I snuck peeks of my phone to check the post's progress. Ten thousand! One hundred thousand! By the time I went to bed, we'd cracked one million. But the most amazing moment came a week later, when someone from Australia posted the image to the Facebook wall of Trisha Malcolm, *YMN's* editorial director. The post came from an entirely different source! They did not credit *YMN*, but it was unmistakably the exact same photograph. It had gone so viral that the content was stolen and being sent around the Internet anew!

I confess, I have no idea how to follow this up. What could possibly compare? If only I'd had Mary McGurn's article on page 30, with information about Facebook Live, as a guide. Also in this issue, we take a look at the current state of retail, which is changing for all industries (page 44), and at our own industry, in Daryl Brower's piece about TNNA (page 42). Plus, you'll find some great information about selling your store (page 32) and establishing price points (page 34). And in the meantime, I'll keep posting to Facebook, hoping to again strike gold.

I'm so looking forward to March, when we will host our first *YMN* Summit. We're taking some of the best parts of our Smart Business Conference—the networking, the collaborative idea-sharing—and making it a full-day intensive (see details on page 3). Not only am I excited to see friends old and new; I'm also eager to hear about the challenges and triumphs you've had and are anticipating for the future, as we work under the guidance of an expert business facilitator to grow your businesses. Registration is open and early bird pricing is still active, so go to our website, www.yarnmarketnews.com/conferences, and register today.

The **YMN Summit** would like to hear from you before we meet: Please go to surveyMonkey.com/r/YMNSummit18

Erin

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



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JANUARY 2018

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Koigu Magazine 9

Multi Colour Pullover

By Mary Stowe

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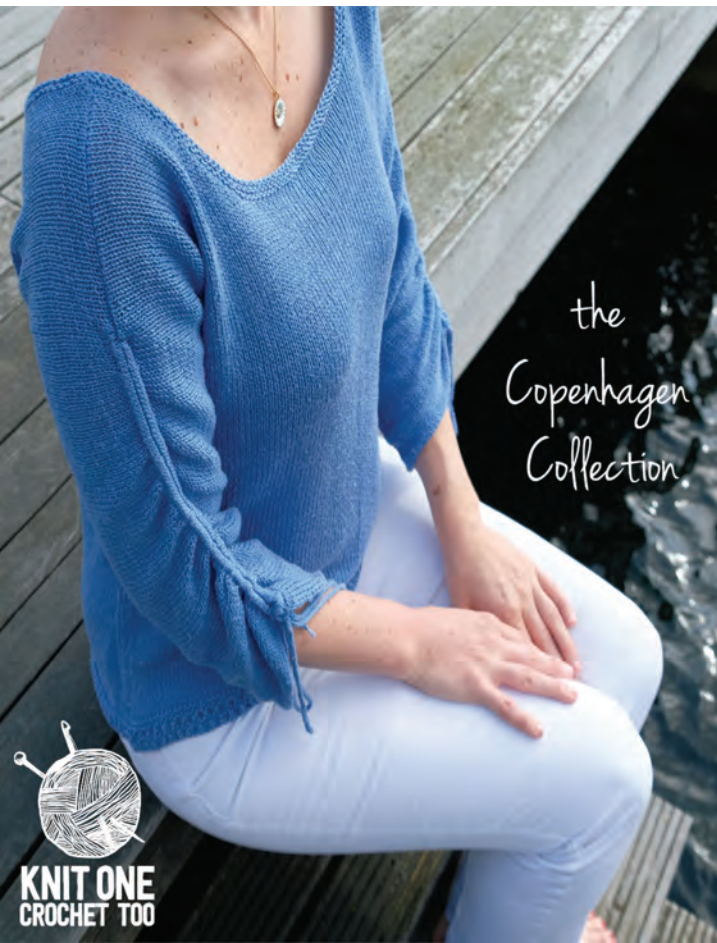
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The next issue of YMN will mail in April.



Plymouth Yarn Design Studio Presents

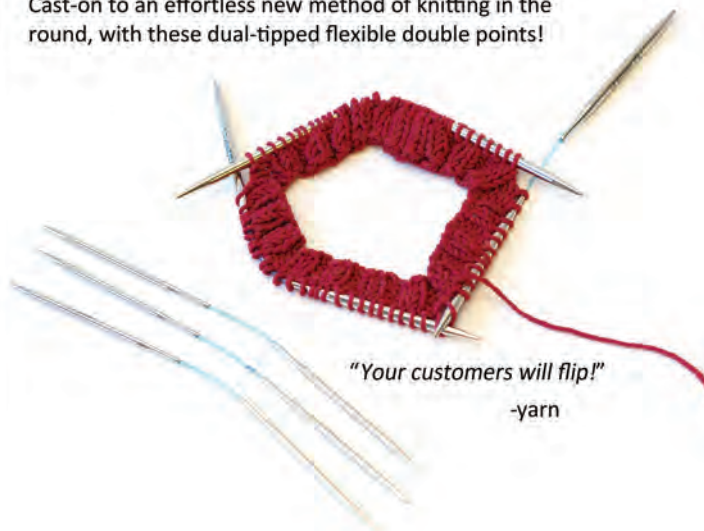
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ULTIMATE KNITTING EVOLVES

▼ In 2002, when SoHo Publishing, LLC released the second edition of *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book*, the hand-knitting industry was in the throes of a scarf craze, knitting blogs were just becoming a thing, and eyelash yarn was all the rage. Fast-forward 15 years. A lot has changed.

Due out in February, the third edition of *The Ultimate Knitting Book* comes with 75 extra pages and covers the many advancements made in hand-knitting's hygge corner of the world since the last edition came out. Crack the binding of this new reference and you'll find enhanced sections on design that go beyond sweaters to include shawl mania (more than 25 separate shawl shapes), plus dozens of hats, mittens, socks and gloves. The popularity of techniques such as brioche, entrelac, mosaic knitting and double knitting is documented as well. Plus, the entire volume has been refreshed with a color-coded navigation system and deep cross-referencing for easy researching.

www.sixthandspring.com

SHEEP PUT THE FAROE ISLANDS ON THE MAP



▼ Last November, the Faroe Islands—an autonomous country within the Kingdom of Denmark, the island group is located in the North Sea, halfway between Norway and Iceland—made its debut on Google Street View thanks to a few good sheep. Hitherto unavailable on the Google Maps feature, the 18-island archipelago sought to claim its place in cyberspace. To capture Google's attention, the territory's tourism board strapped 360-degree solar cameras to the backs of five sheep. Why sheep? The animals are an important part of the landscape and

economy on the islands, outnumbering people at a population ratio of about 80,000 to 50,000.

Spearheaded by former Visit Faroe Islands employee Durita Dahl Andreassen, the Sheep View campaign went viral, with stories featuring the media-genic sheep and sweater-clad Andreassen appearing all over the world. Turns out the hardy, dual-coated Faroe sheep made respectable videographers, contributing dramatic footage of the islands' picturesque landscape to the search engine. Google eventually contributed a Street View

Trekker and extra 360-degree cameras to the project. Though much of the photography of the island's roads and hiking trails that made it onto Street View was shot by people, a number of the roving sheep shots also made the cut.

Levi Hanssen, content manager at Visit Faroe Islands, reported that the publicity has been good for business. "We saw an increase of about 10 percent in visitor numbers in 2017," he says. Not baaaad. View the sheep footage at www.visitfaroeislands.com/sheepview360.

BAGGING A COLLAB



▼ What do you get when knitting-organization maven Della Glein and multi-hyphenate knitting celebrity Vickie Howell chat at a TNNA show? A new bag, of course.

The Vickie Howell for della Q “Tink” Tote and Zip Pouch is a classic, lightweight bucket bag designed for small to medium grab-and-go projects. Freestanding, with a convenient snap-in zip pouch for easy accessory access, the cotton canvas bag is lined in polyester, has faux-leather handles and can even withstand gentle machine washing in a front loader.

The colorblocked bag comes in three colors—natural with turquoise, mustard or pink accents (pictured above)—colors that coordinate with the logo of Vickie Howell’s new YouTube video series, *The Knit Show*. The bag launched on November 1, and by the end of that month Glein was set to reorder additional stock.

“It’s a good brand mix,” Glein said. “It’s something different and sells at a really good price point.” She hinted the launch had gone so well that future Vickie Howell for della Q accessories may be coming soon. To order, visit www.dellaq.com.

5,000 HATS? Y NOT?

▼ Last fall, the senior knitting circle at the 92nd Street Y in New York City reached an important milestone: 5,000 hats knit for charity. The senior knitting circle, which has been meeting since 2011, was the inspiration of Phyllis Greenwald, a member of the Y’s Himan Brown Senior Program, who recognized the role knitting can play in keeping seniors mentally active and engaged.

Serving up to 700 people at any given time with dozens of programs every week, the Y’s Himan Brown Senior Program functions as a kind of lifelong-learning mini-versity, offering classes, lectures and other events to seniors ages 60 and older, explains program director Jo Frances Brown. Every Wednesday, 25 members of the knitting circle gather to knit hats for premature infants and cancer patients, work on individual projects or drop off what they’ve made. The group’s oldest member, 98-year-old Anita Sherman, knits one hat every night.

“We offer people instruction and camaraderie and free materials and whatever they need,” says Brown. “It’s a feel-good thing—creative and social and focused.”

The knitting’s circle’s first batch of 40 hats was donated in September 2011 to Memorial Sloan Kettering’s Pediatric Day Hospital. Since then, hats have been distributed to New York-based institutions including New York-Presbyterian Komansky Children’s Hospital, Mount Sinai West and the American Cancer Society’s Hope Lodge, as well as hospitals nationwide including Vassar Brothers Medical Center—Dyson Center for Cancer Care, Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer

NEW OWNERS FOR ZEALANA

▼ Zealana, known for its luxury possum-blend yarns, has been acquired by Extraordinary Yarns, one of Australasia’s leading yarn wholesalers. The 10-year-old yarn brand had been owned by Woolyarns Ltd.

Extraordinary Yarns currently sells a wide range of U.K. brands, including Sirdar, Sublime and King Cole, to retailers in Australia and New Zealand. “Extraordinary Yarns brings decades of experience in hand-knitting yarn and is renowned for personalized customer service,” says the company’s Steve Dowling. “Acquiring the Zealana brand is an exciting new chapter for Extraordinary Yarns, and our team is looking forward to working closely with Woolyarns and new retailers around the world.”

As part of the acquisition, Extraordinary Yarns will sell the full line of Zealana yarns and pattern books out of the company’s warehouse, located outside of Melbourne, Victoria. “This new relationship means both retailers and consumers benefit greatly,” says Woolyarns Marketing Manager Jimad Khan. “All Zealana yarn blends remain unchanged, and the change of ownership allows Woolyarns to focus resources on product development and innovation.” The sale was announced last November.



Center—Pediatric Oncology, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and more.

Last year the group set the goal of making 5,000 hats by November 28—Giving Tuesday—which was instituted at the 92nd Street Y. The group more than met its goal.

“This is something that keeps people active, especially when they are home alone,” explains program assistant Dafna Gorfinkle. “We have goals we are trying to hit, and we find new places to donate; it keeps the project fresh and exciting. It’s a wonderful social activity, and we’re happy we’re able to give back.”

A YEAR OF GIVING

▼ The yarn shop Jimmy Beans Wool and the yarn company Lorna's Laces have joined forces to generate thousands of dollars for select charities throughout 2018. Each month, a renowned designer will release an exclusive knitting pattern made using custom-dyed yarn by Lorna's Laces. Kits for the KALs will be sold via Jimmy Beans Wool.

"The collective enthusiasm to give back as a community is infectious," says Jimmy Beans owner Laura Zander. "With a community of our size, we anticipate we can make an impact really worth something, and we get to learn about so many incredible causes along the way."

The Year of Giving goal is to donate \$5 for each kit sold to a rotating charity chosen every month by the pattern designer. (Designers and their selected charities will be announced quarterly.) Each month's project kit will cost

around \$40, but prices may vary. Participants can sign up for individual months or for every project throughout the year.

Designers and nonprofits for the first quarter include Lorna's Laces's CEO Amanda Jarvis for January, who has selected the ASPCA as her cause; Tanis Gray for February, who will donate proceeds to Save the Children; and *Vogue Knitting* magazine in March, which will raise money for UNIDOS Disaster Relief & Recovery for Puerto Rico.

"We get to collaborate with 12 designers and dye custom colors for each project, and every effort will be for a greater good," says Jarvis. "Lorna's Laces is built on a drive to deliver innovative products that excite the passions of [the yarn] community, and this project is built upon those very principles. To learn and share these designers' individual community passions is a



profound opportunity." Knitters were able to sign up for the program as early as Giving Tuesday, November 28, 2017, but the program continues through 2018. For more information, visit www.jimmybeanswool.com.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL YARN STORE

▼ Mark your calendars for the first-ever celebration of all things LYS, Local Yarn Store Day, Saturday, April 21. Developed by TNNA's Yarn Group, LYS Day is modeled after successful programs in other industries—Record Store Day, Independent Bookstore Day, Local Comic Shop Day—that have proven track records of driving traffic into bricks-and-mortar retail locations. Last year, for example, Independent Bookstore Day helped indie booksellers boost regular averages for April Saturdays by wide margins: 85 percent of participating stores reported sales increases averaging 132 percent.

"There's been such a renaissance for bookstores and local record stores," explains TNNA Vice President and former Yarn Group Chair Courtney Kelley of Kelbourne Woolens. "We wanted to take this Main Street support model other industries have used and replicate it for our industry."

To foment consumer interest, TNNA is encouraging wholesalers, manufacturers, authors and designers to create unique items TNNA-member yarn shops can sell on LYS Day, things like exclusive

hand-dyed colorways, special patterns or collections, a custom yarn or LYS Day branded accessories. Yarn shops can generate enthusiasm by scheduling special events such as trunk shows, celebrity appearances, store product launches and demonstrations and create a party atmosphere with music and food.

"LYS Day is a day of celebration of your bricks-and-mortar shop. What will make this a success is for wholesalers and retailers and designer members to create something special to encourage consumers who are not TNNA members to engage with those who are," Kelley says. "But it's up to the membership to organize and create worthwhile programs, like pattern release parties and special sales, which TNNA will promote to help draw people into shops."

TNNA, for its part, will provide a website with participating stores listed, a calendar of events and LYS Day graphics shops can use to promote their activities. Learn more at www.tnna.org/page/LYS-Day/The-Local-Yarn-Store-Day.

SQUAM GOES ON

▼ When Elizabeth Duvivier, founder of the legendary biannual Squam Art Workshops, blogged that the September 2017 workshop would be the last, she received several offers to take over the event, none of which felt right to her. But after getting to know fiber artist Meg Fussell,

daughter of Tif Fussell (of Dottie Angel fame and a Squam teacher), Duvivier hired Meg to run the events, while she serves in an executive director capacity. For updates on Squam, visit www.squamartworkshops.com/blog.

INDIE ONLINE MALL

▼ What if all the cool vendors at your local fiber festival had an online market where they could sell direct? This was the question that gave birth to FiberCrafty.com, an online marketplace where spinners, dyers and sellers of fibery miscellany can open online storefronts.

Unlike Etsy, which has become a vast digital bazaar selling everything from crystals to succulents, FiberCrafty focuses exclusively on the fiber crafting community. Developed by passionate knitter, spinner and crocheter Pam Maher, the site “speaks” the language of the fiberati. Looking for yarn? You can search in multiple ways, not only

by weight but by fiber types, sheep breeds and dye styles.

FiberCrafty launched in May 2017; since then, 140 shops have opened under its virtual umbrella, offering nearly 1,300 products ranging from hand-dyed sock yarns and rovings to stitch markers, project bags, shawl brooches, sheep-shaped soap, fleeces and more.

“My hope is that FiberCrafty becomes the go-to for someone who wants to buy from indie dyers or indie bag makers and that they see it as the de facto option for indie fiber shopping,” Maher says. Check it out at www.fibercrafty.com.



NEW PRESIDENT FOR COATS

▼ Coats, the world's leading industrial thread manufacturer and producer of Coats, Red Heart, FreeSpirit and Anchor, has appointed Stephanie Leichtweis as president of North America Crafts. She replaces Michael Schofer, who now serves as chief supply chain officer. Leichtweis comes to Coats from her position as CEO of Fibre-Craft LLC, which provides creative craft brands in the United States and internationally.

“Stephanie has wide-ranging experience in product development, innovation, brand management, sales and marketing strategy, as well as an established track record in running a business in the crafts sector,” says Coats Group Chief Executive Rajiv Sharma. “She is ideally placed to lead our North America Crafts business as we pursue profitable sales growth.”

Leichtweis is charged with accelerating profitable sales growth through enhanced consumer marketing. She also joins the recently launched Coats Global Innovation Forum, an internal group tasked with developing and delivering pioneering ideas in threads, yarns and textiles in order to meet customers' evolving needs.

PEACE BEGINS WITH YOU

▼ Christina Campbell, a.k.a. the Healthy Knitter, wanted to write a book about walking and knitting. As a professor of nutrition and physical activity at a major research university, she thought knitters would love to learn more about exercise.

Not so much. Campbell soon discovered that knitters were about as interested in learning about the benefits of walking as they are visiting a doctor who talks about weight. As she continued to explore the notion of “healthy knitting,” Campbell's ideas about health expanded. If exercise makes someone feel less stressed, maybe encouraging peace was the answer?

In 2015, Campbell held her first peace-along by publishing a simple cowl pattern, *Knit Your Peace*, which sold for \$5. She provided Ravelry uploads from December 1–21 with ideas about how to live more peacefully to those who purchased her pattern. By the end of her second peace-along, in December 2016, 25,000 people from every continent except Antarctica had downloaded the pattern and ostensibly were knitting for peace. Buoyed by her success, in 2017 Campbell upped the involvement

with a more complicated project, tangible fundraising and round-the-world stitching for peace.

Asking \$3 for the pattern—an asymmetric triangular shawl that evokes the ripple effect—Campbell is donating proceeds, after expenses, to three nonprofit organizations: Camino de Paz, a New Mexico middle school that teaches children how to run a sustainable farm in the context of an academic curriculum; The Wilderness Awareness School, which connects young people and adults with nature; and Every Mother Counts, dedicated to reducing maternal mortality in the United States and globally.

In an effort to “peace it forward,” Yarn Scout, a Bozeman, Montana, yarn shop, offered special Project Peace kits in their own hand-dyed colorway, as well as in three color combinations of Malabrigo Silky Merino, and are donating 20 percent of the proceeds from kit sales to The Dreaming Zebra Foundation. Plus, yarn shop and dyer Knit Circus of Madison, Wisconsin, sold kits to support the project, with 10 percent of profits going to Heifer International.



“I am sincerely trying to build peace in our community and nation,” Campbell says. “So many people are looking for a glimmer of hope, and with this you get the pattern, you get the knitting. And if you read the blog posts, you realize it's your choice to choose peace, which puts you back into being responsive to what's happening in the world instead of being reactive.” To purchase the pattern, visit www.ravelry.com/patterns/library/project-peace-2017.

NEW KIDS ON THE **MAGALOG** BLOCK

▼ In the continuing quest to engage wholesale and, ultimately, retail customers, two major yarn companies launched magalogs this winter. What's a magalog? A portmanteau of "magazine" and "catalog," it's a cross between the two types of publications, offering elements of each. **Plymouth Yarn Company** is debuting what it calls an e-magazine on its website, while **Classic Elite Yarns** is launching a 44-page print pub. Both premier in January.

"We definitely want to capitalize on knitters and yarn shops and have them participate in the magazine," explains Kaelin Hearn, marketing director and design coordinator at Plymouth. "We'll have features about local yarn shops, what's happening there and what designs they are creating with our yarns. We really want to engage yarn shops and celebrate the knitting community."

Scheduled to be updated twice a month, *Plymouth Yarn Magazine* features four major sections delineated by color-coded tabs: Yarn, Design, Free Patterns, and Shops and

Happenings. Content will focus on yarn features, new designs, inspiration boards, kit ideas, free pattern highlights, information about how yarn shops use Plymouth products, industry happenings and other news.

Classic Elite, too, hopes to capture the imagination of the larger stitching community through its business-to-business-to-consumer printed publication. Slated for biannual release to introduce new seasonal offerings, Classic Elite's *The Hub* ships directly to wholesale customers. "This publication is intended for retailers," explains Classic Elite owner Betsy Perry, "while also being something they can share with their customers, introducing them to the new spring offerings, including yarns, what patterns will be available and other information."

The first issue of *The Hub* includes a history of Classic Elite's flagship mohair-blend yarn, La Gran, along with a piece about how linen yarn is manufactured,

free patterns, a runway-to-knitwear design scoop, behind-the-scenes photos of staff, the family members Classic Elite presses into service as models, and industry news.

"We wanted to have a conversation with our retailers on a regular basis," Perry explains. "How do we communicate with our customers and their customers meaningfully when the landscape has shifted so dramatically? We wanted something tactile that a shop can leave on the community table or offer at a special event that would have some value to the person receiving it."

To view *Plymouth Yarn Magazine*, visit www.plymouthyarn.com/magazine. To request a copy of *The Hub*, call (800) 444-KNIT or email info@classiceliteyarns.com.



GARN IT!

▼ For the first time, BC Garn, the venerable Danish wholesaler of natural yarns founded in 1972, has a North American distributor. Kelbourne Woolens, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2018, will distribute BC Garn products in North America. Kelbourne will also continue to distribute yarns from The Fibre Co. in North America.

Focusing on basic, well-priced yarns—many of them organic—the BC Garn range gives Kelbourne mainstay yarns to offer in addition to the luxury blends from The Fibre Co. "What appealed to us about the yarns," explains Kelbourne Woolens co-owner Kate Gagnon Osborn, "is that they are really good-quality basics from a well-established company." In February, Kelbourne will introduce seven BC Garn products to the North American market, which will include organic wool, wool, organic cotton, linen, tussah silk and a wool/cotton blend.

To maintain the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) certification of certain BC Garn yarns—GOTS is a stringent organic fiber processing standard that requires independent vetting of the entire supply chain—Kelbourne Woolens had

its warehouse GOTS certified. "This is an added bonus for people who are concerned about the environment," Osborn says. "GOTS certification is not just about the wool; the manufacturing and social conditions of the manufacturing are considered, too. We're proud to be able to support that."

Also new from Kelbourne is the company's first Kelbourne Woolens-branded yarn, Andorra, a 2-ply 60% merino/20% Highland wool/20% mohair sport weight in twelve colors. The release comes with a 1960s-inspired pattern collection by Osborn's business partner, Courtney Kelley. (Names in the collection are an homage to the British television series *Call the Midwife*, which Kelley binge-watched while finishing samples.)

"Everyone loves merino," Osborn says of Kelbourne's new yarn. "Highland wool adds some strength and tooth, which you want in a yarn for stitch definition and texture. The mohair provides sheen, a lot of strength and a little halo."

Look for Kelbourne-style pattern support for the BC Garn line at the TNNA trade show in June. For more information, visit www.kelbournewoolens.com.

January 12–14

Vogue Knitting LIVE!

New York Marriott Marquis
New York, NY
vogueknittinglive.com

January 13

Winter Woolfest 2018

The Columbian Theatre
Wamego, KS
facebook.com/WinterWoolfest

January 19–21

Slater Mill Knitting Weekend and Fiber Art Marketplace

Traditional Arts Studio
Pawtucket, RI
slatermill.org/calendar/10th-annual-knitting-weekend

January 25–28

Oxford Fiber Arts Festival Pavilion

Oxford, MS
oxfordarts.com/events/fiberfest

January 26–28

TNNA Winter Trade Show

Embassy Suites by Hilton
Las Vegas, NV
tnna.org

January 27

Farm Fiber Days

Wayland Winter Farmers' Market
Wayland, MA
farmfresh.org/food/farmersmarkets_details.php?market=387

February 9–11

Delmarva Wool and Fiber Expo

Ocean City Convention Center
Ocean City, MD
woolandfiber.com

February 10–11

Buckeye Alpaca Show

Arena Complex Summit County
Fairgrounds
Tallmadge, OH
buckeyealpacashow.com

February 15–18

Madrona Fiber Arts Winter Retreat

Hotel Murano
Tacoma, WA
madronafiberarts.com

February 23–26

Stitches West

Santa Clara Convention Center
Santa Clara, CA
knittinguniverse.com/west

February 23–March 11

Roving Indiana Yarn Crawl

Central IN
rovingindiana.com

February 24

Farm Fiber Days

Wayland Winter Farmers' Market
Wayland, MA
farmfresh.org/food/farmersmarkets_details.php?market=387

February 24–26

Sheep in the City Getaway

Comfort Suites Milwaukee Airport
Oak Creek, WI
sheepinthecitygetaway.com

February 24–March 12

Roving Indiana Yarn Crawl

Various locations
Rovingindiana.com

February 28–March 3

Vogue Knitting Destinations:

Berkshires Knitting Intensive
Red Lion Inn
Berkshires, MA
vogueknittinglive.com/berkshires18

March 1–4

Rose City Yarn Crawl

Portland, OR
rosecityyarncrawl.com

March 9–10

Jay County Fiber Arts Festival

Jay Community Center
Portland, IN
visitjaycounty.com/fiberfest

March 9–11

Vogue Knitting LIVE Chicago

Hilton Chicago Hotel
Chicago, IL
vogueknittinglive.com

March 12

Yarn Market News Summit

Hilton Chicago Hotel
Chicago, IL
yarnmarketnews.com/conferences

March 13–24

Vogue Knitting Tour of Scotland and England

travelingtogether.net/knitting.htm

March 15–17

Edinburgh Yarn Festival

Edinburgh Corn Exchange
Edinburgh, Scotland
edinyarnfest.com

March 15–18

Knit North Yarn Crawl

Boston, MA
knitnorthyarncrawl.com

March 17

Heartland Fiberpalooza

Winterset Elementary School
Winterset, IA
heartlandfiber.net/fiberpalooza

March 22–25

Stitches United

Connecticut Convention Center and Marriott
Hartford, CT
knittinguniverse.com/stitches

March 23–24

Fibres West

Cloverdale Exhibition Park Fairgrounds
Coverdale, British Columbia
fibreswest.com

March 23–24

Carolina Fiber Fest

North Carolina State Fairgrounds
Raleigh, NC
carolinafiberfest.org

April 5–8

Dallas–Fort Worth Fiber Fest

Irving Convention Center
Irving, TX
dfwfiberfest.org

April 5–8

Minnesota Yarn Shop Hop

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
minnesotayarnshophop.com

April 6–8

Pittsburgh Creative Arts Festival:

Knit, Crochet, Quilt, Create!
David L. Lawrence Convention Center
Pittsburgh, PA
pghknitandcrochet.com

April 6–8

Fiber Forward: A Juried Exhibition

Celebrating Knit and Crochet
David L. Lawrence Convention Center
Pittsburgh, PA
fiberforwardpgh.com

April 6–9

Vogue Knitting Destinations:

Imperial Yarn and Imperial
Stock Ranch
Imperial Stock Ranch
Maupin, OR
vogueknittinglive.com/imperial18

April 7–8

YarnCon

Chicago Journeymen Plumbers
Union Hall
Chicago, IL
yarncon.com

April 12–15

Interweave Yarn Fest

Loveland, CO
interweaveyarnfest.com

April 13–14

Fiber Event at Greencastle

Putnam County Fairgrounds
Greencastle, IN
thefiberevent.com

April 13–14

Spring Creative Festival

International Centre Entrance 1
Mississauga, Ontario
csnf.com/spring-show

April 14

New Jersey Needle Festival

Presbyterian Church
Pluckemin, NJ
needlefest.com/NJNeedleFestival.htm

April 14–15

Spring Fiber Expo

Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds
Ann Arbor, MI
fiberexpo.com/page/page/4831882.htm

April 19–22

Long Island Yarn Crawl

Long Island, NY
longislandyarncrawl.com

April 20–22

Countryside Artisans Spring Studio Tour

Maryland Countryside
countrysideartisans.com/index.htm

April 20–22

Smoky Mountain Fiber Arts Festival

Great Smoky Mountain Heritage Center
Townsend, TN
smokymountainfiberartsfestival.org

April 21

Olde Liberty Fibre Faire

Bedford Breakfast Lions Club
Bedford, VA
oldefibrefaire.com

April 26

Vogue Knitting Tour of Toronto and Montreal

travelingtogether.net/knitting.htm#Canada

April 27–28

Yellow Rose Fiber Producers Fiesta

Seguin-Guadalupe County Coliseum
Seguin, TX
yellowrosefiberproducers.com

April 27–29

Okfiberfest

Okanogan County Fairgrounds Agriplex
Okanogan, WI
okfiberfest.org

April 27–29

Woolith Fair: A Greater Vancouver Yarn Crawl

Vancouver, British Columbia
woolithfair.ca

April 28

Connecticut Sheep, Wool and Fiber Festival

Tolland County Agricultural Center
Vernon, CT
ctsheep.com

April 28

Gore Place Sheep Shearing Festival

Gore Place
Waltham, MA
goreplace.org/sheepshearing-festival

April 28

Powahatan's Festival of Fiber

Village of Powahatan
Powahatan, VA
powhatansfestivaloffiber.com

April 28–29

New York's Washington County Fiber Tour

Washington County, NY
washingtoncountyfibertour.org

April 28

Toronto Knitters Frolic

Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre
Toronto, Canada
frolic.torontoknittersguild.ca

May 4–6

Rites of Spring Fiber Frolic Yarn Tour

Wisconsin
bleatinghearthaven.com/2018-rites-of-spring-fiber-frolic.html

May 5–6

Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival

Howard County Fairgrounds
West Friendship, MD
sheepandwool.org

▼ **Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book (revised edition)**

By the editors of Vogue Knitting Sixth & Spring Books; \$39.95
ISBN: 978-1942021698

A reference that calls itself *The Ultimate Knitting Book* has big shoes to fill, but this classic—newly revised and formatted—remains a



go-to source for knitters eager to expand their knowledge. The sheer scope of the book is im-

pressive, covering virtually every topic in the world of yarn and knitting. Basic skills are included, of course, along with advice on tools and yarn choice, as well as a terrific section to help readers decipher and follow knitting patterns. And there's more—a finishing guide, advice on measurement and fit, instructions on how to knit collars, buttonholes and edgings. Aspiring designers will note new sections on designing shawls and accessories as well as sweaters. Color-coded chapters, running cross-references and a spiffy new design worksheet are other welcome additions. Clean, contemporary design and scores of clear photos and drawings help ensure this book's place as a truly essential knitting reference.

▼ **Japanese Knitting Stitch Bible**

By Hitomi Shida; translated by Gayle Roehm
Tuttle Publishing; \$16.95
ISBN: 978-4805314531



This fantastic stitch dictionary features more than 250 Japanese patterns, mainly lace, cable and twisted stitches, created

by renowned designer Hitomi Shida and carefully translated by knitting expert Gayle Roehm. In keeping with Japanese style, patterns are charted only and accompanied by closeup photos that allow readers to focus on intricate details. Knitters new to Japanese lace will appreciate Roehm's thoughtful introduction as they get

used to a slightly different knitting style. (Less experienced knitters, take note: Shida's stitch patterns tend toward the more advanced.) Dive into this gorgeous collection for a burst of inspiration and excitement as you explore the wonderful assortment of patterns highlighting the beauty of Japanese knitting.

▼ **Traditional Swedish Knitting Patterns**

By Maja Karlsson
Trafalgar Square Books; \$24.95
ISBN: 978-1570768217

Sweden is known for many things—meatballs, ABBA and Ikea come to mind—but when knitters think of Sweden, they invariably picture the gorgeous stranded knitwear. Maja Karlsson dove deeply into traditional



Swedish patterns to create this lovely collection. Motifs ranging from reindeer to roses grace the designs, along with modern, sometimes unexpected, colors and thoughtful design details. A handy selection of additional motifs is a welcome bonus and will have you happily envisioning even more delightful stranded beauties to knit.

▼ **Baby Botanicals**

By Alana Dakos
NNK Press; \$14
ISBN: 978-0988324954

You may know Alana Dakos by her *nom de knit*, "Never Not Knitting," and have no doubt oohed and



aahed over her nature-inspired collection for adults, *Botanical Knits*. Giving equal time to wee ones, Dakos presents pint-sized versions of five of her popular adult styles in this adorable collection. Leafy motifs abound in these kid-sized beauties, which show off the clean styling and exquisite details that Dakos is known for. The four cardigans and one pullover are offered in a vast size range, allowing every kid in the family, from baby to teen, to share in the knitted love.

▼ **The Mitten Handbook**

By Mary Scott Huff
Harry N. Abrams; \$19.99
ISBN: 978-1419726620



If your frostbitten fingers long for cozy warmth, if you've got ideas for mittens but can't find the right patterns, or

if you have hands that just aren't the average size or shape, then you've got to get your hands on Mary Scott Huff's guide for making the perfect mitten. Egged on by eager students, Huff has assembled a guide that gives mitten knitters everything they need. This information-packed book starts with a plain-vanilla template, then breaks down mittens to their components, exploring variations on each. Valuable sections on fit and different approaches to construction are followed by a fetching collection of 20 patterns. A terrific source of information and inspiration, *The Mitten Handbook* is a knitting-book-collection must-have.

▼ **Protest Knits**

By Geraldine Warner
Herbert Press; \$16
ISBN: 978-1912217007



A century ago, knitters responded to political events by knitting socks for dough-

boys; today, dissatisfied crafters are knitting hats and armbands in which to protest-march. Whether your taste runs to the subtle (mittens that read "Very Upset") or the direct (a crocheted pincushion/voodoo doll), this book gives you plenty of ways to express your beliefs: A brain-inspired hat to stand up for science, a knitted "vote" button to wear while registering new voters, and a crocheted rainbow bike-seat cover showing your pride are crafty alternatives to posters and petitions. Photographs of protesters wearing handcrafted items are featured prominently, while political slogans, sprinkled liberally throughout, help put the fire in your needles.

▼ **Gradient Knits**

By Tanis Gray
Barron's; \$21.99
ISBN: 978-1438010595

Designer/teacher Tanis Gray knows just what to do with yarns that slowly melt from one color to another, and it shows: each pattern in this book is presented as part of a lesson, explaining why a particular technique used in that pattern works especially well with gradients and mini-skeins. Textural stitch-



work, lace, Fair Isle and thrumming are a few of the techniques showcasing the gorgeous, mostly hand-dyed yarns. Clear instructions and photo-

graphs walk readers through skills used in the patterns, while Gray provides cheery encouragement to help the knitting go smoothly.

▼ **Slow Knitting: A Journey From Sheep to Skein to Stitch**

By Hannah Thiessen
Harry N. Abrams; \$29.99
ISBN: 978-1419726682

As Ferris Bueller once said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." Substitute "knitting" at the beginning of the quote and you've got the philosophy behind this new book. Spurred on by her belief that knitters should pause instead of blindly rushing through projects, Thiessen urges knitters to



approach the craft in a different way. She offers a set of goals (sourcing yarns carefully, considering one's effect on the environment, and experimenting fearlessly, for example), helping knitters reevaluate how their individual crafts play into larger issues like consumerism and mindfulness. Profiles of yarn companies that exemplify the slow-knitting ethos and a carefully curated selection of patterns provide a starting point for slowing down and enjoying each and every stitch.

▼ **Alterknit Stitch Dictionary**

By Andrea Rangel

Interweave/F+W; \$26.99

ISBN: 978-1632505538



Just because you love peeries and XOs and lice patterns doesn't mean you can't also be fascinated with less tradi-

tional stranded-knitting patterns. No one knows this better than Rangel, who has assembled a diverse collection of decidedly untraditional patterns and motifs. You won't find a snowflake or a reindeer here, but you will find chickens and hippos, as well as skull and crossbones, zombies and saguaro cacti. If representational motifs aren't your thing, you'll find many other striking options, including geometric patterns, swirling lines, tiles and tessellations. Five inviting designs showcase these eclectic stitch patterns and will get you started on your own alternate stranded-knitting voyage.

▼ **Stitch Camp**

By Nicole Blum and Catherine Newman

Storey; \$19.95

ISBN: 978-1612127507



It is a universal truth that children love to make things. They also complain of being bored—often.

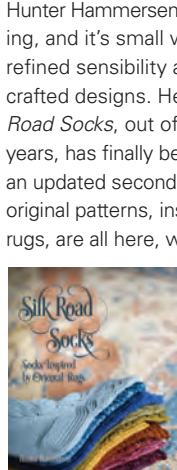
The next time your kid claims there's nothing to do, hand over *Stitch Camp*, which taps into maker culture by introducing six fiber crafts: sewing, knitting, crochet, weaving, embroidery and felting. Each section walks kids step by step, photo by photo, through the basics. Projects include small, quick items that are easy to complete as well as larger undertakings with more complex design elements. There are so many wonderful things about this book—intriguing insets with snippets of knowledge, the colorful, photo-laden design, the quirky projects—but *Stitch Camp's* best feature is its tone: matter of fact, informative, accessible but never condescending.

▼ **Silk Road Socks (2nd edition)**

By Hunter Hammersen

Pantsville Press; \$26.95

ISBN: 978-0984998289



Hunter Hammersen has a rabid following, and it's small wonder, given her refined sensibility and meticulously crafted designs. Her first book, *Silk Road Socks*, out of print in recent years, has finally been rereleased in an updated second edition. The 14 original patterns, inspired by Oriental rugs, are all here, with added sizing

so each pattern can be knit in both fingering and sport/DK-weight yarns. Two new patterns are included, along with updated photos and charts. Anyone who appreciates beautifully designed patterns featuring gorgeous lace and cables will want to snap this one up.

▼ **The Art of Lithuanian Knitting**

By Donna Druchunas and June L. Hall

Trafalgar Square Books; \$29.95

ISBN: 978-1570768484

Druchunas and Hall have many things in common: a love of knitting, a gift for writing and a fascination with Lithuania. They've combined all three loves into a richly researched book that explores the history of knitting in this Baltic nation. Deftly intermingling geographical tidbits, interviews with knitters and other artists, and stories from history, the duo introduce



readers to the long tradition of knitting in Lithuania, a country perhaps not as well known for its knitting as nearby Estonia or Russia. Twenty-five original patterns draw on this vibrant history, adapting traditional stitches, color motifs and techniques for contemporary knitters. A wealth of photographs brings Lithuanian history and culture to life—and, more important, helps preserve these precious textile traditions for future generations of crafters.

▼ **Knitting the Continental Way**

By Denise Mazal Resnerova

AuthorHouse; \$28.99

ISBN: 978-1524600235



Resnerova is a staunch proponent of Continental-style knitting, in which the working yarn is held and manipulated in the left hand. The Prague native, who now owns a yarn shop in Texas, also believes that the best way to learn how to knit is to first learn how to crochet, so that holding the yarn in your left hand will seem easy and natural. She therefore devotes the first half of her book to the basics of crochet; only after this crash course will the reader cast on her first knitted stitch. Along the way, Resnerova provides plenty of photographs, step-by-step instructions and tips and tricks, all of which are interspersed with photographs of the Czech Republic and personal reflections and vignettes from her life. Resnerova's untraditional approach may not appeal to all readers, but her enthusiasm and love of knitting shine through on every page.

▼ **The Curse of the Boyfriend Sweater**

By Alanna Okun

Flatiron Books; \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1250095626

Fans of BuzzFeed will remember Okun as the writer who skillfully introduced knitting topics to the non-knitting masses. She has moved on from BuzzFeed, but she hasn't lost her love of crafting. Her first book, an essay collection that is by turns lighthearted and touching, demonstrates that Okun's literary talent isn't limited to the listicle. Using her love of stitching as a jumping-off point, Okun puts her own spin on the curse of the boyfriend sweater, reveals her own anxieties, and writes movingly of the grief she feels when thinking of her late grandparents. (Not to worry, BuzzFeed fans: She includes a few lists you'll love, like the brilliant "Words They Need to Invent for Crafters.") The book, filled with humor, heart and maybe even a life lesson or two, is a must-read for those who share love of all things crafty.

■ TREND WATCH

Here's what was selling the first week of December 2017:

Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

- *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book* (revised edition), by the editors of Vogue Knitting (Sixth&Spring Books)
- *Japanese Knitting Stitch Bible*, by Hitomi Shida and translated by Gayle Roehm (Tuttle Publishing)
- *Alterknit Stitch Dictionary*, by Andrea Rangel (Interweave/F+W)
- *Slow Knitting*, by Hannah Thiessen (Harry N. Abrams)
- *750 Knitting Stitches* (St. Martin's Griffin)

Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

- *A to Z Crochet* (Martingale & Co.)
- *Crochet One-Skein Wonders* (Storey)
- *The Complete Book of Crochet Stitch Designs*, by Linda P. Schapper (Lark Crafts)

Barnes & Noble Knitting List (print publications)

- *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book* (Sixth&Spring Books)
- *Japanese Knitting Stitch Bible*, by Hitomi Shida (Tuttle Publishing)
- *Slow Knitting*, by Hannah Thiessen (Harry N. Abrams)



Cascade Yarns Hampton

Specs: 15 colors; 70% Pima cotton/30% linen; 273yds/100g

Gauge: 22–24 sts = 4" on U.S. 5–6 needles

Distinctions: The sleekness of linen elevates cotton's game once again in this good-looking combo. Whereas unmercerized cotton has a flat, matte finish, Hampton glistens with the subtle sheen flax brings to this DK. But the softness? That's all Pima.

Projects: Hampton's breathability and generous put-up make it a candidate for a spring/summer workhorse. Knit cardigans, tanks, wraps and more with this versatile yarn.

New to linen and hemp? See how yarn companies continue to find new ways to showcase beautiful bast fibers.



Schoppel Wolle/Skacel Collection El Linio

Specs: 12 colors; 100% linen; 164yds/50g

Gauge: 18–24 sts = 4" on U.S. 0–4 needles

Distinctions: Put up in the cutest bundle ever, El Linio is a tape yarn so slender it looks to have been knitted by elves. But like all linens, this tonal chainette is fiercer than it looks—a true, shiny warrior with the strength to drag home groceries.

Projects: This sophisticated ribbon adds subtle texture to summer tops and shawls and would make a great point of departure for figure-skimming cardigans.

BASTON

By Leslie Petrovski

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCUS TULLIS

Quince & Co. Kestrel

Specs: 22 colors; 100% organic linen; 76yds/50g

Gauge: 14–16 sts = 4" on U.S. 8–10½ needles

Distinctions: Imbued with the unmistakable gloss of 100 percent linen, Kestrel is a ribbon yarn constructed from a knitted tube. Knitting up in the chunky/worsted range, Kestrel's clever construction delivers the three-dimensional stitches characteristic of a ribbon yarn but avoids the stiffness typical of most linens.

Projects: Think easy throw-ons with plenty of drapey, positive ease, like Quince's Deschain, a boxy pullover with lace features by Leila Raabe, or Davis by Pam Allen, a loose tee with bracelet-length sleeves.





Purl Soho Linen Quill

Specs: 14 colors; 50% fine Highland wool/35% alpaca/15% linen; 137yds/50g

Gauge: 26–30 sts = 4" on U.S. 2–5 needles

Distinctions: Purl Soho launched Linen Quill in 2016, and since then the yarn has become something of a cult favorite for its gorgeous drape, versatility and crisp finish. Use bigger needles on this fingering weight for an airy, see-through fabric, smaller ones for a tighter knit.

Projects: Leave it to Purl Soho to provide the kind of pattern support that yields classics in multiple gauges, like the Open Air Wrap, the perfect Lightweight Raglan Pullover, and Julie Hoover's meticulously crafted V-neck pattern, Goode.



Hemp for Knitting allhemp6LUX

Specs: 13 colors; 100% hemp; 143yds/100g

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

Distinctions: What if you could buy hemp yarn that's already been washed into soft submission? Look no further than allhemp6LUX. The company dyes each strand separately before plying for peak luster and color.

Projects: Almost indestructible, hemp is the ideal medium for a garment that stands, sits, dances and hangs in the closet, so go ahead and knit the skirt. Add a ruffle at the hem to leverage hemp's much-vaunted drape and watch it swing.

Rowan Hemp Tweed

Specs: 17 colors; 75% wool/25% true hemp; 104yds/50g

Gauge: 19 sts = 4" on U.S. 7 needles

Distinctions: Hemp steals the show in this surprisingly luxurious yarn. Comingling with a hardy wool, hemp fibers and slubs lend a bright sheen and washability to this modern blend that unfurls into yards of interesting, textured stockinette.

Projects: Opt for a sweater's quantity and let the yarn speak for itself in simple pullovers, tees and scarves. It's soft enough for next-to-skin garments and versatile enough for four seasons of wear.





Plymouth Yarn Equinox

Specs: 8 solid and 6 hand-dyed colors; 65% superfine merino/20% linen/15% silk; 439yds/100g

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

Distinctions: New for spring, Equinox combines must-have merino for softness, silk for sheen and linen for coolness to create a spot-on exposed-shoulder-season DK. Its solid and hand-dyed hues color-coordinate for easy mix and matching.

Projects: Combine Equinox's complementary solids and hand-dyed colors in shawls, scarves and wraps to ward off overzealous air conditioning.



Fibra Natura Flax

Specs: 31 colors; 100% linen; 137yds/50g

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

Distinctions: This is a classic plied linen yarn, a little stiff and cool to the touch, but dazzling in the way linen has of taking up dye. It's a light DK that you'll want to knit or crochet something pretty with, because you'll have it forever. Linen just gets softer and more beautiful the more you wash and wear it.

Projects: Deploy this yarn in service of hardworking items such as dishcloths, hand towels and summer tank tops, or take advantage of its predilection for yawning eyelets by stitching up lace wraps and shawls.

Classic Elite Yarns Hanako

Specs: 12 colors; 50% cotton/50% linen; 220yds/100g

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

Distinctions: Cotton gets a boost of elegance and strength from linen in this easy-wearing worsted, which debuted last spring. Hanako's round 5-ply construction whips up into high-definition knits and purls.

Projects: Look to Tian Foley's Hanako Garter Pullover as the perfect vehicle for this yarn. With its modern split hemline and cuffs and garter-stitch ridges, the sweater shows off Hanako's strong stitch definition and beautiful drape to full advantage.





Elsebeth Lavold/Knitting Fever Hempathy

Specs: 43 colors; 41% cotton/34% hemp/20% Modal; 153yds/50g

Gauge: 22–23 sts = 4" on U.S. 4 needles

Distinctions: What can hemp *not* do? Almost too good to be true, hemp is antimicrobial, UV-resistant and one of the toughest fibers you'll ever slide onto your needles. Plus, it just gets softer and more pliable with wear. This well-established DK blend comes in a wide range of saturated colors and knits up into soft, skin-friendly fabrics.

Projects: Put Hempathy to work in market bags, summer tanks and tees, and lacy cardigans and wraps.

Louet Euroflax Lace

Specs: 35 colors; 100% wet-spun linen; 630yds/110g

Gauge: Not given

Distinctions: Don't expect this yarn to bound from one needle to the next like wool. But what it lacks in bounce, it more than compensates for in beauty and strength. Choose wood or bamboo needles for better grip. Swatch and wash to ensure FOs come out as expected, then enjoy.

Projects: If your knitting motivation fades with the first sign of tulips, put a pretty lace shawl pattern into your shopping cart along with a cone of Euroflax and whip up that garment you've been coveting—it will block out like angel wings.



The Fibre Co. Meadow

Specs: 23 colors; 40% merino wool/25% baby llama/20% silk/15% linen; 545yds/100g

Gauge: 32–36 sts = 4" on U.S. 1–3 needles

Distinctions: As lush as a field of young grass, Meadow combines the feel of a luxury yarn with the informal look of a more artisanal product. Because of the way the different fibers take dye, this heavy lace-weight has a heathered quality, adding interest to simple pieces.

Projects: You can't go wrong if you turn to the five-piece collection Hikari (Japanese for "light") by Michiyo. Designed for Fibre Co., the collection takes full advantage of this yarn's drape and stitch definition in garments such as Tsumuzikaze, a unique pull-over with an asymmetrical hem, and Mori, a lacy cardigan that doubles as a shawl.

More in Store for TNNA

As I write, there is a chill in the air here at TNNA headquarters in Chicago, and we're gearing up for warmer weather and three days of networking, thought sharing and collaboration at the 2018 Winter Market in Las Vegas (January 26–28).

This year's Winter Market has been redesigned with your shopping experience in mind. With a new hotel-show layout, you'll have the opportunity to meet directly with more than 140 wholesalers and check out the latest products and trends in a more intimate space. I look forward to seeing you there.

We had a busy fall at TNNA and are planning on an even busier winter. In October, the board of directors approved our new 2018–2021 strategic plan. With actionable goals and objectives, the plan provides a roadmap for the next three years. The three goals include creating a cohesive membership that cultivates the entire industry ecosystem in support of dynamic business structures, defining and strengthening TNNA's value proposition and

creating a stronger consumer base for TNNA members. Starting in 2018, we will work toward completing our goals and objectives and look forward to sharing with our members and the needlearts market updates on our progress and successes.

Last October marked the fifth annual Spinzilla. Each year, this monster of a spinning week raises funds and awareness for the TNNA Foundation, which seeks to foster curiosity, creativity and a feeling of achievement through the teaching of needlearts. In 2017, we had more than 1,600 spinners and 72 teams register to participate, and 5,163,890 yards of yarn were spun during the event. We're already busy getting ready for Spinzilla 2018 (October 1–7).

We also announced in October an exciting partnership with HRB Solutions, Inc., who will provide our members with the opportunity to participate in Lifestyle Health Plans. The program is designed to give our members a comprehensive and affordable healthcare

solution designed to meet all the compliance requirements of the Affordable Care Act. By offering affordable coverage along with proactive cost containment and employee wellness features, member companies can strategically manage healthcare costs while still maximizing benefits for their employees.

In November, TNNA hosted a fantastic webinar with designer Edie Eckman on how to use an expert teacher to draw attention to the products and services you offer. It offered insights on what questions to ask before hiring a teacher, how to promote the teachers who are working in your shop, and best practices when structuring teacher agreements. Our education team is already working on our 2018 webinar calendar and securing more great teachers to present on topics of interest for needlearts professionals. I am excited by the many events, partnerships and educational opportunities TNNA has on the horizon for next year and all that 2018 has in store for the needlearts industry.

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



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JO SHARP



Standards, Updated

In the fall of 2003, a time when hundreds of thousands of new needleworkers were entering the marketplace, the Craft Yarn Council introduced the first industry Standards & Guidelines (S&G) for knitting and crochet. The guidelines were the result of months of work by representatives of all segments of the yarn industry to establish a series of guidelines and symbols to bring uniformity to yarn, needle and hook labeling and to patterns. The goal: to make it easier for industry manufacturers, publishers and designers to prepare consumer-friendly products and for consumers to select the right materials for projects and complete them successfully.

We understood at the outset that acceptance of the symbols and charts would not be immediate, but that over time they would come to be accepted and commonly used. This proved to be true. We also said S&G would be organic, changing as the industry grew. As a result, we have made incremental changes since 2003.

In 2016, the CYC board agreed it was time for a more thorough review and asked Mary Colucci,

CYC's former executive director, to gather a group of industry notables to update S&G. The review process took a year. We cannot thank the members of the review committee, who spent many hours writing and editing and lending their expertise to this effort, enough. Special thanks to Carla Scott and Joni Coniglio, both of whom were instrumental in formalizing the original guidelines, for their contributions.

The newly revised Standards & Guidelines pdf can be downloaded at www.YarnStandards.com. Following are highlights of a few of the changes:

- Abbreviations for basic Tunisian crochet stitches have been added.
- An expanded list of knit chart symbols and cable symbols have been added.
- A list of commonly used abbreviations for loom knitting have been added.
- An explanation of wraps per inch has been added to better serve weavers.
- Body measurement charts have been updated where necessary.
- Hand and shoe sizing guidelines have been added.

- An explanation of schematics has been added.
- The crochet and needle sizing charts have been expanded and steel crochet hook sizes have been added.
- Information about care labeling and commonly used symbols has been added.
- Guidelines for designers who want to submit project ideas to yarn companies or magazines have been completely rewritten.

One of the most significant changes involves project pattern ratings. In the past, consumers were asked to rate their skill level as either beginner, intermediate or experienced. The revised levels, now entitled Project Levels, rank knit and crochet patterns, not consumers. The actual symbols remain the same, but two of the categories were renamed. Now the breakdown is: Basic, Easy, Intermediate and Complex.

As CYC has always stressed, S&G provide a framework of common definitions, explanations and symbols for crochet and knitting. As with other areas of S&G, over time they will be updated and refined. We welcome your comments.

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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See You in Sin City

Cold days and even colder nights have us bundled up in fuzzy woollens and reaching for hot drinks. As the weather turns colder, crafters again embrace their needles, hooks and looms. Sweater-weather season can be a magical time for the yarn industry, as knitters, crocheters and weavers race to cover themselves and their loved ones in handmade sweaters and accessories. Hopefully your shops are bustling, your warehouses are busy shipping yarn and your email is buzzing with pattern sales.

Believe it or not, it's time to start planning for spring. Soon we will all be talking about cotton- and linen-blend yarns, breezy spring and summer color palettes, and carefree beach accessories. There is no better place to plan and buy for the next season than at a TNNA trade show.

TNNA's winter market in Las Vegas will be a new and exciting opportunity for both exhibitors and retailers. This smaller, more intimate venue will allow you to network and grow your

relationships in fresh new ways; shop for the latest trends in a quieter, less overwhelming environment; and sample the hottest must-have products coming to market for spring. Though a small ballroom of traditional booths will be set up, most exhibitors will have their own private suite (or two) on one of four designated floors. Attendees are invited to hop from room to room to network, peruse the new items and place orders.

Think the winter market is just for needle-point? Think again. As I write this article, more than 35 yarn-specific companies are signed up to exhibit, and I'm sure more will be added by the time this magazine is in print. You can find the full list of exhibitors here: www.tnna.org/page/WM18Exhibitors.

In addition to prepping for spring purchases, orders and designs, perhaps you'd like to revitalize your business or learn how to step up your social media game. If so, then TNNA's business-class curriculum is just what you're looking for. In Vegas, we will have a respect-

able array of professional development courses on offer that are designed to help you take your business to the next level. Topics range from cash flow to newsletter marketing to Instagram. Education begins on Thursday, and class times do not overlap with show hours, so you can take all the classes you want and be confident that you won't miss any official show time. You can see all the classes and descriptions here: www.tnna.org/page/WM18ClassesTeachers.

After a busy day of classes and suite hopping, kick back and relax with us every night at the Sip and Stitch in the atrium, where there's sure to be oodles of yarny fun afoot. Of course, while you're in town be sure you leave plenty of time to take in the sights of the city; Vegas offers a wealth of entertainment. I know a few yarn folks are nervous about this unique venue, but I look forward to seeing what this format show can do for the yarn industry. I'm ready to embrace the fun and the challenge. Are you?

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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The Power of the Influencer

If you're a veteran of the yarn industry, you've witnessed the dramatic shifts in the creative retail landscape. An industry that was once controlled by independent retailers and print publishers is now taking its cues from digital-content creators and social media influencers. Creative consumers are attracted to these personalities—bloggers, digital creators, Instagram stars, YouTubers and other social media celebrities—which is why more and more brands are partnering with them to drive sales. Today, the power in the creative supply chain lies with these influencers, and forward-thinking retailers are engaging and promoting them. Here's a brief history of who came to power when.

1940s–1960s: Independent retailers were the go-to source for consumers. Regional and national distributors (Notions Marketing, Herrs) were founded and supported the independents. A number of variety store chains, Ben Franklin Crafts and Wal-Mart for two, also started up.

1970s–1980s: As new craft categories material-

ized, bricks-and-mortar stores continued to dominate the creative retail landscape. New craft and fabric chains entered the marketplace, including A.C. Moore, Cleveland Fabrics, Hancock Fabrics, Michaels and New York Fabrics.

1990s: Mass and specialty big box retailers became more competitive by going national and offering an assortment of creative products. Retailers began to merge, including Michaels with Leewards and Jo-Ann's with Fabric Centers. Cloth World and New York Fabrics.

Early 2000s: Print publishers and project books began moving to digital distribution. Online retailers surfaced, inspiring suppliers and traditional retailers to create their own consumer-focused websites. Multi-category independent retailers declined significantly, replaced in part by highly focused single-category stores offering unique assortments, education and one-on-one customer relationships.

2010–2015: The digital marketplace exploded with the popularization of Amazon, Etsy, Creative

Bug and other sites and channels that offer shopping, instruction, entertainment and online consumption of crafts. Brands changed their focus to millennial marketing as urban creative stores serving this generation emerged.

2015–Present: Today, the consumer's source for creative inspiration and education is largely online, with video consumption growing at a fast rate. As a result, bloggers, video creators, and cable celebrities are now in control and guide consumers to their purchasing decisions.

Here at AFCI, we recognize how important these influencers are to your business. In 2017, we introduced a Digital Content Creator membership for these industry professionals. As a result, you'll see a growing presence of influencers and more opportunities for your business to connect with them through an AFCI membership and at our upcoming and future events, including Creativation. As for what lies ahead, only time will tell. But we'll be here to support you and help your business prosper.

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.globe.

[illegible]

Yarn Ideas and Other Updates

The Yarn Ideas tab, found at the top of Ravelry pattern pages, is a great place to view the yarns that other Ravelers have used for their projects. Local yarn store owners and staff have told us that they make frequent use of this tab to easily find projects made in different yarns, particularly when the pattern calls for a yarn that isn't carried in their shops. Yarn Ideas will show all the yarns that Ravelers have actually used and entered projects for. Popular patterns will have wider range of yarns to browse than new patterns or ones with fewer projects. On this tab, the yarns are shown in order of popularity within Ravelry projects, and you can click on the number of projects (underneath each yarn photograph) to see the actual projects that were made with the yarn in question.

Ravelry recently added a search bar at the top of the Yarn Ideas tab, which is helpful for when you want to quickly look at a popular pattern in a few different yarns carried in your shop. We also have a link to click through to an advanced search for the yarn ideas shown, so that you can use our search filters to further

narrow the yarns by fiber type or other attributes. When you're on the Yarn Ideas tab, you'll notice at the top right that we now show the yards (or meters, if you have set that as your preference in your Ravelry profile) required for the pattern, as listed on the pattern page. If you track your yarns in your Ravelry stash, we'll tell you how many of your stashed yarns were used for projects, and you can click on the "only yarns in my stash" box at the top of the tab to view those specific yarns and projects.

In other Ravelry updates: Did you know that your shop's Ravelry directory page has an "add to favorites" button? You and your customers can add shops to favorites, include them in Ravelry bundles like "Visited" or "Want to Visit" and add comments in the bundle. Ravelry bundles allow you to group anything you can add to your Ravelry favorites, so you could make a bundle for your shop featuring your shop's page, new yarns you'd like to highlight, patterns you are holding classes for and more. To find your shop's direct listing, use the yarn shop search, which can be found on the "yarns" tab or directly at

www.ravelry.com/shops, and we have plans to give the shop search filters like the other advanced searches. If you want to add your shop to our LYS directory or get connected to it so that you can edit your shop's information, we have instructions and helpful links for you at www.ravelry.com/yarnshops. The information on your shop's directory page is public, which means that your shop's directory pages will show up in Google searches and be viewable without a login. Make sure you list your hours, accurate address, and have a great photo or two of your shop. If you have an active LYS Ravelry ad, we will also display a "yarns" tab on your shop's page, listing all of the yarns you have in your ad.

If you have questions or are wondering how something on Ravelry works, you can post at any time in the For the Love of Ravelry Forum, or check out our Help tab, which is the home base for all the Help resources on Ravelry. On the Help tab you'll also find the link to contact us so you can email with any Ravelry questions you may have. We always welcome your feedback.

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 LESLIE GONZALEZ, VICE PRESIDENT, CERTIFICATION



Behind the Scenes at the New TKGA

When last we reported, we had just established TKGA as an independent, volunteer-run 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. In November, we celebrated our first anniversary. I'm happy to report that the organization has grown by leaps and bounds.

Our educational programs continue to be very popular. We now offer eight correspondence courses and 21 mini courses. We are in the planning stages on virtual classes accessible via Skype or FaceTime.

Our first onsite event, Masters Day, which will be held in conjunction with the Dallas Fort Worth Fiber Fest, is scheduled for April 5-8. Master Hand Knitting Committee members are currently working on presentations for the event.

Our educational journal, *Cast On*, is back on a quarterly schedule in its new digital format. Our monthly newsletter, K2TOG, keeps members up to date on news and is a great way for members to connect.

Our website, tkga.org, is now up and run-

ning. Here, members can access current and past *Cast On* articles, along with other guild-related information. A three-person team monitors the site to answer inquiries on all aspects of the guild. Behind the scenes, a network of data programs keeps us current on accounting and organizes our enrollment. We continue to have a strong presence on Ravelry, where we've hosted a number of knit-alongs and given away sought-after prizes.

We now offer support to our affiliate guilds through a guild-exclusive section on our website that offers guild-related educational material. Each month, K2TOG dedicates an entire section to guild news.

We continue to support machine knitters, with articles in *Cast On* and K2TOG that support this growing sector. We are planning to add patterns that will be machine versions of some of our popular hand-knit patterns.

The Master Hand Knitting Program has always been the cornerstone of our guild, and it has continued to grow, with 390 people pur-

chasing a level and 12 new Master Knitters graduating in 2017. Our biggest news is the addition of new certification courses. These courses allow members to learn and become recognized as experts in a specific professional aspect of knitting. The Knitting Judges program transitioned with TKGA and is still available to members. In June, we rolled out the first of our new courses, Certification in Technical Editing. This course has been extremely popular, enrolling 65 students as of this writing. To date, three members have completed the course and become Certified Technical Editors, with the others set to complete the program soon.

We have also just released a new certification course for knitting instructors. We are currently working on a Professional Knitter Certificate that will recognize members for their knitting abilities. These knitters will be ready to provide test knitting for designers and finishing and fixing services for other knitters. All of our certified professionals are listed on our website and in our Ravelry group.

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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CGOA Under New Management

The Crochet Guild of America has been busy: In the past year, we hosted the 2017 Chain Link Conference and began working with a new management company, Celtic Associations. Celtic, located just north of Chicago, was chosen by CGOA's board of directors after a lengthy search and vetting process based on their expertise with day-to-day management and experience helping groups grow. The Celtic team, led by Deb Ryan, managed a smooth transition from our previous management company and is already executing plans developed by our board, including a realignment of volunteer committees and an update of the bylaws, which will streamline processes and allow our board to work at a higher, more strategic level. As well, they are looking for ways to increase membership and helping us plan the 2018 Chain Link Conference.

Speaking of the conference, our 2017 show, held last July, was a great success. More than 350 attendees came together at

this wonderful all-crochet event, which featured a vibrant market, full classrooms led by crochet experts over three days, a design competition and a busy crochet lounge. The event ended with a celebratory banquet and fashion show that honored CGOA's newest Hall of Fame inductee, Carol Alexander.

CGOA is currently hard at work planning for the 2018 conference, to be held from July 25–28 in Portland, Oregon. The City of Roses informs our theme, and we expect the same high caliber of instructors and design competition submissions, as well as top-of-mind exhibitors from across the country. Of course, CGOA members are entitled to reduced registration rates and receive other benefits—early access to the market and more—so I encourage you to consider not only attending or exhibiting at the Portland Chain Link Conference but becoming a member of CGOA (if you haven't already).

In addition, CGOA is focused on broadening our offerings beyond professional development and the Masters' Program to include a new

educational program that focuses on crochet fundamentals. That program will roll out in early 2018. We are also striving to provide useful content at www.crochet.org and via social media sites including Ravelry, Facebook and our blog. Ours is a friendly and collaborative membership intent on providing and receiving the best crochet has to offer.

If you are interested in crochet—at any level—I invite you to become part of our community. We welcome everyone from beginners to Masters. Become one of more than 2,500 members across the country and internationally. Dues are just \$35 per year or \$60 for two years. We also offer sponsorship opportunities for companies that are interested in supporting our efforts. Your logo will be featured on our website home page, and you will receive special sponsor benefits. Feel free to contact CGOA's office for more information about member and sponsor benefits and the Chain Link Conference at info@CGOA.com. When you think of crochet, think CGOA!

The Crochet Guild of America promotes the education, art and heritage of crochet. For more information, visit crochet.org.



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We're Live!

BY MARY MCGURN

Why Facebook Live is a prime opportunity for solopreneurs and small businesses.

Facebook Live launched in April 2016, offering live-streaming video capability to Facebook users. When you tap the Live icon, you can start broadcasting in real time from your smartphone—soon from your desktop—and write a description for the broadcast.

Places, Everyone

Why, as a business, should you embrace Facebook Live? Three reasons, the first being audience. With 2.01 billion active users, Facebook dominates the social media landscape. It's a mind-blowing number that unfortunately gives you no encouragement when you look at your own page's organic reach among fans. But when you go live, Facebook bends over backward to bump your broadcast up in fans' newsfeeds. The site will also notify your fans of your broadcast, if the fans have opted for notification. If you make it a practice to regularly broadcast great content, you may find yourself on Facebook's new mobile TV viewing tab, Watch.

Reason two is live streaming's content. It is intimate, authentic and visual, all of which creates the content that connects. Add the "in the moment" of live streaming, and you've given Facebook users the best content a business can provide. Types of live content to try: behind-the-scenes reporting, how-to tutorials, the latest news and interviews with staff or visiting designers or instructors. When conducting an interview, you can choose to broadcast it with a split screen, so your guest can actually be located anywhere in the world. Facebook is building this offering into Live, but you may be better served for now by using a third-party app like BeLive (free and from \$12/month).

Reason three is the many opportunities you have to repurpose your live content, especially if it's evergreen, a term used to describe content that stays relevant in perpetuity. Download the no-longer-live video and post it to your website, your blog, to other social media channels or use it as a Facebook video ad.

Action!

Once you've decided to embark on live video, you need to get set up. The first, and probably the biggest, hurdle to get over is fear. It is not uncommon for those unaccustomed to talking to a recording camera to grow shy and awkward, trip over or forget their words or inadvertently

move in a way that blocks the best views for the audience. The best way to get over this phobia is to practice—a lot. Use your personal profile for these practice sessions: Set your privacy settings to "me only" and then tap the live icon on your smartphone, checking that the camera is indeed facing you. Try not to look at yourself; instead, focus your gaze at the camera. Once you're feeling more self-assured, broadcast live to your friends. A fun way to continue practicing is to mount a live-broadcasting challenge for a certain number of days among willing friends. The broadcasts should be short and can focus on anything that's happening in the moment. Your comfort level will grow, and then you'll be ready to tape live for your business.

Before you go live, check your Internet speed (use speedtest.net) for upload. Live broadcasting needs a minimum of 4 mbps up, with a recommendation of 10 mbps up. If you have a too-weak signal, the "Go Live" button will be grayed out.

If you care how the live broadcast looks on a desktop, hold your smartphone in a horizontal/landscape position. No matter how you orient your smartphone, it's always preferable to use a tripod, unless you plan to move around during your broadcast. If so, consider fitting your smartphone onto a stabilizer. Be aware that viewers will excuse shaky video, but not bad audio. Be sure you're close to the smartphone's microphone when you're speaking or, to be absolutely sure of your audio's quality, use a wearable microphone. If you're on Wi-Fi and want to stop unwanted calls, switch on the airplane mode and then enable Wi-Fi.

Don't neglect to add a short attention-grabbing description of the live broadcast, which should help viewers understand what they're about to watch. It's also a good idea, before you hit "Go Live," to have a simple script in mind so your message is clear. A few simple suggestions on what you can/should include in your script when you begin: saying hi to your viewers, using first names; asking viewers if they can hear you; briefly telling viewers what you're going to talk about; introducing yourself and calling out to viewers that they can tap the Follow button and opt in to get notifications the next time you go live. Facebook does give you the ability to schedule live broadcasts.

When you're into your content, don't get distracted by comments; tell your viewers that

you'll answer them at the end of or after the broadcast. The same goes for not letting the number of view counts bother you. They're typically low initially, but as you become a frequent user, they will go up.

That's a Wrap!

When ending your broadcast, think about summarizing your content, giving a call to action, announcing your next broadcast and encouraging viewers to keep interacting with Likes, Shares and further comments.

Finally, as for length for a live broadcast, Facebook recommends a minimum of 10 minutes (you can be live for up to four hours). This gives Facebook time to gather viewers by letting your fans know you're live and for viewer interactions to grow. To find your ideal time, experiment with different lengths and check your page's Insights.

According to Facebook, one in five videos on its site is a live broadcast. Daily watch time has increased four times since its 2016 launch. Isn't it worth exposing yourself to reach and engage more fans to get a jump on the competition?

Smartphone Gear

RODE smartLav. A professional-grade, wearable microphone connected to a smartphone or tablet headset jack that records via the RODE Rec app for iOS, or any other audio app.

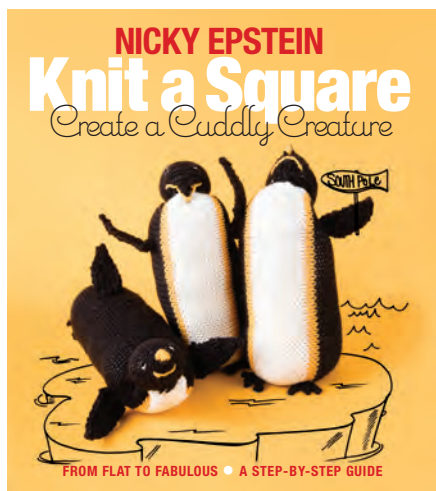
SMOVE Stabilizer. Holds your smartphone of any size steady as you move. Great for panoramas and face follows. Portable and doubles as a charger.

GorillaPod Grip Tight PRO Video. Flexible tripod paired with a locking mount allowing for fluid pan and tilt motions.

Auxiwa Selfie Light Ring. Clip-on light with three settings that gets brighter when you click the power button.

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.

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Before You Go

Winding down your business without leaving loose ends.

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Whatever the impetus—impending retirement, new career goals, changing family dynamics, burnout—nearly every small business owner will eventually face the difficult process of closing his or her doors. While it may be tempting to rush through this bittersweet process, you can't simply hold a sale, lock your doors and walk away. To avoid legal problems and to preserve your personal and business reputation, you'll need to wind down your business in an orderly way.

Exit Strategies

Take the time to plan your path forward. Start by setting a proposed date of closure. This date may be quite soon, because of a sudden illness or an offer to purchase; if you're planning ahead, the date may be years in the future. Working back from the date, list each thing that must happen between then and now. Among the issues to consider: Will you be selling the business, inventory and/or brand? What do you need from a financial standpoint to be able to secure your future? Do any external constraints hamper your ability to close on time, such as a lease term? Having a concrete timeline, even if it's tentative, will help you focus on the essential decisions you have to make, and may clarify whether your proposed plans are doable.

Consider Your Customers

An abrupt closing can create bad publicity in a small industry, so think about when to tell the world you're closing shop. Remember that loyal customers are the best source of purchasers for your remaining inventory. If your customers have pending product orders, have paid for future classes, or have gift card balances outstanding, you'll need to create a policy for issuing refunds (unless you can complete orders, conduct classes or honor the gift cards before the store closes). Remember that local business communities are a small world—a reputation for mistreating customers can harm you in the future if you decide someday to launch a new venture.

Face Value

You've maintained careful financial records that are up to date, right? Now it's time to take a realistic look at what you have from the standpoint of a prospective buyer. Is the business profitable? By how much? What are its tangible assets? What about intangible assets, like goodwill, brand recognition and social media presence? Consider the depth and strength of your customer base, options for growth and larger market trends. Admittedly, it can be difficult to assign monetary value to these

concepts. An industry consultant or professional business appraiser can help translate these markers of value into a range of concrete dollar figures. One benefit of advance planning: You'll have time to shore up any weak areas to maximize or enhance the face value of the business.

Assess Your Balance Sheet

If you don't have the luxury of long-term planning, you'll have to approach valuation in a more direct way. List each of your business's current assets, then determine whether any of them can be converted into cash—and if so, for how much. Don't forget to consider the following:

- Your remaining inventory. How quickly can you sell it? Can it be sold at full price or will you need to deeply discount it? Will you get a more advantageous price from a liquidator?
- Store fixtures and furniture. Check out websites like eBay and Craigslist to gain a sense for what a prospective buyer might pay.
- Leased assets. Compare the termination fee for a point-of-sale system or a copier with the purchase option. It may make sense to find a buyer for the used equipment.
- Accounts receivable. Are they collectible? Should you offer discounts to get paid more quickly?
- Intellectual property. Do you own the rights to

cated in a desirable location or you pay below-market rent, your landlord may be all too happy to negotiate a painless early lease termination. What pending product orders have you placed? Can they be cancelled? If you paid in advance, can you get a refund? Will vendors give you full credit for returning unused product in its original packaging?

Do you have a bank loan or business credit card? Typically, dissolving the business gives the lender the right to immediately demand payment of the unpaid principal of the loan or the balance owed on the credit card. Read all the documentation carefully so you understand what is due when, and have the chance to coordinate any automatic deductions that a bank may impose on your business or personal accounts.

Many states have very strict wage payment laws that require employers to promptly pay employees for work that has already been completed. Be sure you comply to avoid steep penalties.

The Taxman Cometh

After making your final payroll, you'll need to follow the usual procedure for filing state and federal employment tax forms and making any required deposits. You'll also need to file your last state sales and/or municipal tax forms, settling up for the amount of taxes you collected up to the date of closing, and closing out your account(s). Federal tax filing requirements differ depending on how your business is organized—sole proprietorship, partnership or LLC, or corporation. Check the IRS website or consult a qualified tax advisor to make sure you comply with all required filings, which may include filings for unemployment taxes or 1099s for independent contractors.

Each state has its own procedures and filings necessary to dissolve a business entity formed in that state. Officially dissolving the business entity ends your legal obligations to pay annual fees and franchise taxes and to file reports. Consult your state's website or your attorney to determine exactly what needs to be filed and when.

Don't forget to cancel your local business licenses, close your company bank accounts, and terminate any utilities and other monthly, quarterly or annual services (like cleaning, HVAC maintenance or exterminators). You don't want the business hit with an unexpected bill when you should be off enjoying your next challenge.

Carol J. Sulcoski, a Philadelphia-based attorney, is also a knitting author, teacher, dyer and designer.

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The Price to Pay

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BY BROOKE ORTEL

Is the price right? It's a question that all yarn shop owners must grapple with. While many items come with a suggested retail price, is it prudent to always conform to the manufacturer's recommendation? And what about the products that don't come with an MSRP? Careful pricing is essential to building a sustainable business, especially as online competition threatens bricks-and-mortar stores that can ill afford to match Internet prices.

Think Big Picture

Sven Risom of North Light Fibers says that the first step in determining a reasonable price for a particular product is to understand your target audience. While most stores find it prudent to offer yarns and products in a range of price points, targeting a particular group of customers is essential to striking the right balance. Risom's pricing theory depends on several key considerations: a minimum profitability threshold per item, the services a store provides at the time of sale and as follow-up, and the stories behind the products, particularly those that are handcrafted.

By "minimum profitability threshold," he is referring to a calculated amount you must make on every item to cover costs, everything from utilities to payroll. "If you sell a skein below this minimum, you're losing money, which may be OK if you're using it as a loss leader, but not for low-end economy items." While many store owners tend to think in terms of margins, Risom strongly suggests thinking beyond percentages to calculating dollar profit. If keystone doesn't cover the minimum profitability threshold, the price should be raised.

Reconsider keystones

While a product's MSRP provides a useful reference point, think about your own costs and customer base rather than adopting arbitrary pricing. For Craig Rosenfeld, owner of the Philadelphia yarn shop Loop, margins are the most important pricing consideration. He says, "Some store owners rely too much on keystoning. If you're going to maintain profitability, you'll need a more flexible approach. By that I mean never going below keystone, only above." He also recommends making sure that "initial markup is as high as possible, because inevitably you'll have markdowns, which erode margins quickly."

Rosenfeld advises shop owners "to not

compare yourself to the large online retailers or other stores in your area. Think about what products are best for your customers, which services you can provide them with. And don't be afraid to price things higher to get that better margin."

Like Rosenfeld and Risom, Cynthia Cushing of Lakeside Yarn in Excelsior, Minnesota, recognizes that MSRP can be an impractical target for shop owners: "When you offer more services, MSRP is often not a realistic pricing mechanism." Furthermore, higher prices are tied to customer service and the value of in-store guidance from experienced knitters. She encourages store owners to "say out loud what our value is and to get people to value what they pay for," since there's a tendency to "undervalue what we do, which is a poor narrative." Although Cushing has developed her own formula for pricing based on the projected

to seasonal trends in customer demand and adjusts her stock accordingly. For example, she adds more economically priced yarns during the summer months. Yarn shop owners should pay attention to such trends and factor them into their annual budgets. For Schaefer, the key to smart pricing is always being aware of "where you are in relation to your budget."

Her pricing model also doesn't include store-wide sales; in her opinion, conditioning customers to adopt a "sale mentality" is counterproductive. If you know your target audience and set your prices accordingly, you shouldn't have to mark things down. It's difficult when online competition undercuts your prices, but by creating a welcoming environment and offering value-added services such as advice from experienced staff members, successful stores can cultivate a loyal following.

A Quick Guide to Smart Pricing

First of all, know your target: think about what your customers value and how much they're willing to pay for merchandise and services. While you should focus primarily on one specific group, you should also consider the preferences of more economical shoppers. Determine the benefits valued by different groups of customers—premium, value and economy—within your target and factor this into your pricing decisions.

Second, know your costs per skein, a simple calculation of your store's annual dollar costs divided by the number of skeins sold per year. For example, if you make \$1,000 in a year and sell 2,000 skeins, the profit threshold is \$0.50 per skein, so you shouldn't sell a skein for less than this amount unless it falls into the loss leader category.

Third, consider the MSRP and do some research on what other shops are charging per item—but don't price something low simply because another shop does. Your pricing decisions must be based on your shop's unique situation. Finally, be proud of what you offer. As Cynthia Cushing puts it, yarn shop owners need to remind customers of "the unspoken value of what we do."

value of different items, she isn't afraid to deviate on a case-by-case basis.

Get a Feel for It

Beth Schaefer of Westport Yarns in Westport, Connecticut, describes pricing as "an art form, not a science. It depends on the yarn, how difficult it is to get and other considerations." For her, the key to successful pricing is creating a budget, knowing what her margin will be and sticking to it. "Don't just buy yarn because you think it's beautiful," she admonishes. Instead, she suggests, determine how much you expect to sell of a particular yarn and then decide on a reasonable price. Schaefer also pays close attention

Most serious knitters realize that bricks-and-mortar stores staffed with experienced knitters have value that simply can't be matched. Ducking into a shop to chat with a fellow knitter while browsing the luxury yarn selection, for instance, provides a much more rewarding experience than shopping online. Says Craig Rosenfeld, "Your customers will always be able to find what they're looking for cheaper; someone is always having a sale. But if they want the services we offer, if supporting a local business is important to them, they will shop with us."

Brooke Ortel grew up working in her family's retail business on Block Island, Rhode Island.

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RETAIL PROFILE

BY DARYL BROWER

Stash Corvallis, Oregon



"Knitting was a way for me to control something in my life when I didn't feel as though I had much control," says Sonia Ruyts, owner of Stash, a yarn store and community hub in Corvallis, Oregon.

Ruyts took up knitting in the mid-2000s, during a period of struggle in her personal life. "We had moved to a new state and I didn't know anybody. At the same time, I was experiencing infertility challenges as I tried to get pregnant," she recalls. "I was feeling really isolated, and so I wanted to find a way to meet people. I got on Meetup.com and found a stitch-and-bitch group in New Haven, Connecticut. It was the start of a whole new era—and life—for me."

In 2010, Ruyts and her wife moved to Oregon, where Ruyts continued to develop her knitting skills and knowledge. "I got very interested in natural fibers and hand-dyed yarns. In our community in Corvallis, there was [demand] for that," she says. "But I didn't see those kinds of yarns at the local shops, and so I started daydreaming about what I would stock if I had my own store." A year later, she opened Stash.

Leafy Corvallis, a city in central western



Oregon with almost 50 parks and a population of just over 55,000, is home to an Oregon State University campus and is known for its dynamic downtown neighborhoods. "We're definitely an artsy town. It's a university town, but we also have lots of small farms and a really vibrant farm-to-table scene, with a big farmers' market downtown. And then, just in our downtown area alone, we have our shop, a quilt shop, two bead shops and a needlepoint store, plus a bunch of art galleries, music shops and three bookstores," Ruyts says. "The town has [worked hard to] preserve and protect the retail and restaurant business district."

Located in a historic building, the airy, open-concept shop has 20-foot ceilings and a large street-facing window that lets in natural light. Visitors rest or work on a project in a seating area located just inside the front door. There's also a classroom space in the back where classes are regularly held. Also at the back is a play area for kids. "I have two little ones of my own, so I know how nice it is when the kids are engaged and entertained, giving you extra time to look around uninterrupted. We're definitely family-friendly here. I encourage people to bring their children with them," Ruyts says.

The atmosphere at Stash is a very social one, something Ruyts has fostered from day one. "From the start we hosted knit and crochet nights, and then we had open houses, pop-up shops and trunk shows, and we started bringing in guest designers pretty quickly," she says. Many of these events also contribute to customers' education, skill development and community involvement. Stash runs classes regularly throughout the school year; topics include knitting for babies, intro to needle felting, colorwork and socks. A class called Sweater Lab consistently sells out: "People are always wanting to solve the mystery of a well-fitting sweater," Ruyts explains.

"I've always wanted people to know that they can build their skills here; that they can feel comfortable to take risks, get outside of their comfort zone in

terms of trying new techniques, fibers and colors," Ruyts says. "That's so important to me. And we've partnered with other merchants in town on various events. We just held a weaving class at Tried and True, a coffee shop. We're trying to do more things like that, combining two communities in one space."

When the shop first opened, Ruyts led classes and seminars herself, but now she mostly leaves it to her team members, called Stash Enhancers, and guest designers. (Classes are typically six to eight people in size.) She also interacts with customers through social media. The shop has a presence on Facebook, Ravelry, Pinterest and Twitter, but "Instagram is probably the best place to follow along with us in real time. We give shop tours and unbox new merchandise and just do silly stuff," Ruyts says. And for the past three years, she has also hosted a podcast.

"After I turned my hobby into a business and my full-time job, I needed a new creative challenge," she explains. "I love listening to podcasts when I'm knitting or cleaning or cooking or walking, and I started thinking about the conversations I was having with knitters and makers personally and people that I would love to talk to and ask questions of." She's now in her third year, or season, of The Stash Podcast. Each season is 10 episodes and includes conversations with sewing and knitwear designers, artists and authors.

"It's fun to find what people have in common across different creative fields, and we're talking about things like staying inspired, monetizing a creative hobby, making time for making and how it has value in our lives, and even how making is a form of self-care right now," Ruyts says. "Those are good conversations to have."



Stash

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COMPANY PROFILE

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

Lion Brand Yarn Co.



"I just celebrated my 49th year at Lion Brand. I don't even remember if we had a mission statement at that time, but basically the goal was to stay profitable and keep growing," says David Blumenthal, the company's president and CEO.

Lion Brand has a firm mission statement now—"Creating a more colorful, connected and giving world"—and during Blumenthal's tenure, the company has indeed grown: Lion Brand yarns are among the industry's most ubiquitous throughout the U.S. and, increasingly, around the world. Much of the company's success can be attributed to the strong relationships it nurtures with suppliers, distributors and end users.

"We try and stay connected with all of our customers, wherever they shop," says Blumenthal. The company has placed a priority on digital outreach, specifically social media, led by Blumenthal's daughter Shira, the company's brand ambassador. "We have 600,000 Facebook fans, we're on Pinterest and Instagram, and we have a slew of bloggers around the country who promote Lion Brand to their readers. And our e-newsletter goes out every week to nearly two million people," says Blumenthal.

There's also direct interaction through the company's Lion Brand Yarn Studio in Manhattan (shown above). The shop is famous for its window displays, which are fitted with new installations every few months. "It's a global destination for yarn crafters," Blumenthal says. "Not a day goes by that we don't hear about people from all over the world who've made it a point to visit."

But as the leader of a fifth-generation family-owned company, Blumenthal (a member of the fourth generation, and one of eight family members currently working at the company) doesn't underestimate

the role passion plays as a driver of Lion Brand Yarn's continued growth. "[The fact that we're family-owned] gives us a big advantage over our competitors, because the big-box stores we compete against are owned, for the most part, by venture capital firms. They have different priorities and set different goals," he explains. "We look at things for the long term."

Community involvement and social responsibility are guiding principles for the Blumenthal family. They administer the Lion Brand Foundation, worked through the Jewish Communal Fund, and give to numerous charities, including Enactus, which is "committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives," according to its website. Lion Brand also donates to disaster-relief efforts and is generous with yarn donations. "Our offices are filled with letters from churches, synagogues, senior centers and other organizations asking for donations of yarns for their projects," says Blumenthal.

The company is also active in providing knitting education and skill development at home and abroad. "We fund a scholarship at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, and I'm on the board of governors at Shenkar College of Engineering, Design and Art in Israel," Blumenthal says. "We send over our color cards every year, and then knitting craft students select whatever yarns they need, in any quantity, and we ship the yarns to them. At the end of the academic year they put on a tremendous, unusual, original exhibit. For the past seven years we've also brought over interns who are assigned to work



in our design department." He adds: "Those of us who own and operate the company feel that giving is very important to the success of our company."

Lion Brand will celebrate its 140th anniversary in 2018, though Blumenthal says they'll save the big celebrations for the 150th. In the meantime, Lion Brand works on figuring out the best ways to engage distracted consumers. "People are locked into their phones and tablets, and I think that's hindering a lot of crafting in general. It's a constant challenge to find ways to get them away from their devices," he says. Adding to the challenges companies are facing, he notes: "Historically, when unemployment is low and the economy is somewhat good, as it is currently, we notice a downturn in the use of craft yarns."

On the other hand, Blumenthal is seeing an increased interest in natural fibers and hand-dyed yarns. To reach those discerning knitters and crocheters, the company offers its LB Collection: cashmere, cotton, bamboo and merino yarns that the company sells directly to consumers. The company's sales and distribution teams have also expanded the markets they serve. "We've gone international," says Blumenthal. "Last year, we shipped yarn to more than 27 countries. We've also grown our online business to serve those two million people who get our weekly newsletter. To stay alive in any market, whether it's hand knitting or widgets, you have to change and adapt to the current trends, and so far we've been able to do that."

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Employees: 80

Fun fact: Lion Brand Yarn has been working with game-show hostess Vanna White for more than 20 years. David Blumenthal's cousin Jack was watching an episode of "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson" in which White was a guest. She mentioned to guest host Joan Rivers that she was a crocheter; in response, the Blumenthals sent a basket of yarn to her office at "Wheel of Fortune." They received a note back from her saying she'd been working with the brand's Jiffy yarn for many years. She now has her own yarn lines with the company and works with the Blumenthals on several charitable fundraising efforts.

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SHOW BUSINESS

Those planning the annual trek to TNNA's winter show will find that more than the location has changed. The 2018 winter market will be held in Las Vegas from January 26–28, but instead of setting up in booths in a convention hall, as has been the way of the world for decades, exhibitors will showcase what's new for spring/summer in 150 hotel rooms at the Embassy Suites by Hilton. Save for a few vendors who will have traditional booths set up in a ballroom, attendees will travel from room to room to see what's on display. It's a model that the



TNNA's 2018 winter market debuts a new format—and sparks some new concerns from retailers. Here's a look at what's happening, and why.

By Daryl Brower/Illustration by Lisa Henderling

needlepoint segment has used successfully, but it has many yarn retailers feeling a little uneasy.

"The decision to try the new format was a completely board of directors-driven decision and has nothing to do with our new management company," says TNNA president Don Lynch, squelching the rumor that the switch from long-time show-management company Offinger to SmithBucklin was the driving force behind the change. Instead, the impetus was dwindling attendance numbers and the sense that the market wasn't delivering the way it used to. So in an effort to shake things up—and address financial concerns of those exhibiting—a new approach is being tested. "Registration trends told us we needed to look at a new idea," Lynch says.

"Steadily declining attendance at the winter show meant that we could no longer support the convention-center venue in terms of size or cost. The needlepoint segment has been quite successful in running hotel shows, so it was decided that we try this for the entire membership."

The membership, however, seems to be split on the wisdom of the change. Lynch understands the concerns. "It's definitely a different environment," he says. The biggest adjustment? "The suites are more like individual boutiques, rather than part of an open market. Exhibitors and shop owners who haven't done a suite show will en-

same big-picture overview as a convention hall filled with displays, and traffic could go either way. Rooms could become too crowded with retailers trying to take in what's new, and some suites could be bypassed simply because they're out of view. "You may be tempted to skip the remaining suites," says Karen Smith (not her real name), a longtime rep who preferred to remain anonymous. "With the show-floor format you can see what's ahead, and that's more likely to inspire you to keep going."

A few traditional Friday evening events won't be happening this time around, a decision Lynch

hibitors," Lynch explains. "We've heard consistently from our exhibiting members that costs needed to come down." Lynch notes that this could also be an incentive for smaller companies to begin exhibiting. "We hope that smaller companies see this as an opportunity to attend a TNNA show without incurring expenses tied to a traditional convention-center show."

Heather Zoppetti, Yarn Group president and owner of Stitch Sprouts, also sees the change as a boon for smaller companies. "Large companies have been pulling out of the winter show and even the summer show, which is both unfortu-



counter a bit of a learning curve, but their actual business experience shouldn't be any different than it would be at a traditional convention center."

Designer Deborah Jarchow is cautiously optimistic about the change. "I'm hoping the suite format will offer opportunities to sit with exhibitors and have conversations about their products," she says. "There's always so much going on on a convention show floor that this may provide a quieter way to meet." Lynch says that's a good takeaway. "My company [Associated Talents] has exhibited at similar suite-based shows, and it was more of a one-on-one, personal experience."

There are downsides to the format, of course. Moving from room to room doesn't offer the

says is the result of the change in venue. "We decided the fashion show, Sample IT! and the Needlepoint Showcase just wouldn't work well with the new format," he explains. But that doesn't mean there won't be anything to do once the floor closes. "There will be a 'preview' night, where exhibitors can opt into an evening showcase of their suites," Lynch continues. "And as the show hours wind down, we'll be hosting 'Stitch and Sip' in the atrium for all attendees."

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

As in any industry, the bottom line drives what's happening. "By going to a smaller venue, with the majority of the exhibitors showing in their suites, we were able to reduce costs for the ex-

nate and fortunate for several reasons," she says. "For retailers, part of the draw of the show is to see all the new product of the upcoming season. Big companies are part of that draw, and when they don't show, many retailers choose not to attend." But, she says, there's also an upside to the dwindling number of exhibitors. "Without the usual big players, many indie and young companies have been able to become more visible," she points out. "Retailers have turned to them to fill the holes left by the big companies they've stopped carrying because they don't want to patronize companies that don't show."

On the buyers' end, expenses also play a role, but there are other factors as well. "Some shops have mentioned that it is (continued on page 47)

To read a story in the news media about retailing is to confront the idea that the consumption of goods as we know it is coming to an end.

Malls that once vibrated with hordes of teenagers, moms pushing strollers and senior citizens doing laps have become eerie ghost towns. Retail stalwarts including Sears, Macy's and J.C. Penney are shuttering stores. Formerly robust brands like Payless and Radio Shack are in bankruptcy. And even trendy companies like Bebe are closing stores almost in spite of robust online and bricks-and-mortar footprints.

Seriously, what's up? Is it Amazon? E-commerce? A cultural refutation of consumerism? Social media? A reallocating of discretionary funds from clothing and accessories to entertainment, dining, travel and technology? Boredom?

Yes.



For Lonnie Hanzon—a Denver-based designer and artist who re-designed the city's iconic toy store The Wizard's Chest into a 16,000-square-foot castle of fun in 2015—the current retail environment is the result of retailers acting like lemmings. Hanzon, who has created displays and experiences for cities, companies and cultural institutions including the City of Denver,

Neiman Marcus and the Houston Zoo, says retailers facing extinction have only themselves to blame. The culprit: A lack of imagination.

"Traditional retail is in a free fall for several reasons," he wrote in an email. "One size fits none. There is nothing unique to the stores and malls that are failing. The merchandise is the same, the architecture, fixtures, windows, music, (lack of) service, lighting—same, same, same. You can't



THE RETAIL POC

tell one store from another, one mall from another, one city from another. There is no discernible selection of quality (good, better, best)."

The homogeneity of department stores and power centers is partly to blame, but so is e-commerce, which is diverting revenue to online stores. How easy is it to plug in an order for skincare, shoes or vintage buttons and have it show up a day or two later on our doorsteps? "Shopping is no longer a pastime," Hanzon observes. "No one has time to pass. Window-shopping is a chore in a world in which we are being bombarded with too much information."

But people still need—and want—stuff, and anyone who has tapped her digital wallet recently to purchase a sweater's worth of yarn understands that reports of retail's death have been greatly exaggerated. Department stores are struggling, but Blue Apron, the subscription meal service, saw sales surge 133 percent in 2016, and Wayfair, the online home décor and furniture company, experienced 54 percent revenue growth. Retail isn't so much dying as changing. But what is it changing into?

In August, the National Retail Federation's *STORE* magazine published a story listing its Hot 100 Retailers, with Blue Apron and Wayfair topping the list. Retailers who are "winning" in this challenging environment are finding ways to distinguish themselves and engage customers across all their channels. It's interesting to note that fewer than 10 retailers on the list are purely e-commerce players.

When you consider your own buying behavior, it all starts to make sense. Really, how many of us are purchasing yarn from Amazon? Ordering the widget we need for the swamp cooler online? Getting our fresh green juice from Thrive.com? The fact of the matter is this: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, estimated e-commerce sales as a percentage of total retail sales for first quarter 2017 was only 8.5, though that percentage is increasing swiftly.

These days, Americans tend to be fairly agnostic in their shopping habits, happy enough to either "add to cart" or push one, depending on time and inclination. Retailers that are succeeding are doing so not by being safe and beige, but by offering multichannel convenience—opportunities to buy in person and online—and giving us reasons to walk away from our plastic screens and into their stores.

David Sax, author of *The Revenge of Analog: Real Things and Why They Matter*, which details the recent rise of vinyl records, independent bookstores and board-game cafés, agrees. People want more from life than what they can exact from online transactions, he says; they want tangible experiences.

"What is it that draws people?" he ponders about knitting. "Is it the stress relief? Stitch-and-bitch groups? It's like the board-game cafés. You don't need to go to a café to play a board game. The board game is an excuse for socialization. That's a big attraction of knitting as well."

Lonnie Hanzon sees a move toward more experiential, entertainment-focused retail: "Over the next five years, we will see the old models of retail continue to die and start to see the new models, which are really

old models, (re)emerge—exciting product, great customer service, fun experiences, beautiful merchandising, a welcoming environment," referring to storied retail palaces, like Marshall Field in Chicago and Macy's in New York City, that were built long ago. "The great department stores rose in the early 1900s as cultural hubs, city centers, stunning landmarks—living, breathing institutions where change was the constant."

An inveterate showman, Steven Berg, a.k.a. StevenBe, grew up in his mother's yarn shop back when brands like Botany, Spinnerin and Unger ruled the shelves. Following a career in fashion, Berg returned to his roots, opening first the Yarn Garage and then StevenBe in Minneapolis. He has since consolidated both stores in the 7,000-square-foot former firehouse that houses StevenBe.

The shop itself has become a destination not just for Minnesotans but for tourists from around the world, who are drawn to this yarn-packed space that never met an animal print it didn't like. Tea and coffee are always on offer, iPads are scattered around the store, and an Apple desktop workstation makes for easy Ravelry searches. And though the local fire marshal wouldn't allow Berg to keep the building's fire pole, Berg has installed a cardboard one in honor of the shop's firehouse beginnings.

He estimates that 70 percent of his business comes from tourists, who seem particularly drawn to the over-the-top environment he's created. "It's all about the experience," Berg explains. "It's about collecting the sought-after and making it different than what you would experience elsewhere."

In addition to his elaborate bricks-and-mortar store, Berg has created a multichannel enterprise: There's the online shop, proprietary patterns—including the famous Ponchini—two books and vending at knitting events (Stitches, Vogue Knitting LIVE). He's even transformed *himself* into a kind of channel—a charismatic knitting personality who teaches internationally. "You have to stay ahead of the game," he says.

Another big personality, Gina Bonomo, who owns Wool Workshop in Roanoke, Virginia, is leveraging her personal and store brand to get the word out about her store. Because she can't always count on local foot traffic to sustain her business, she's invested heavily in multichannel revenue streams so she can reach knitters the world over. In addition to launching a splashy online store, she sells yarn right off Instagram and recently debuted a spicy video podcast, *The Workshop Girls*—parental discretion advised.

"I'm in a small blue-collar city" whose residents tend to be careful with their pennies, Bonomo says. "But if you look beyond, to the whole world, you'll find people who are addicted to buying more and getting the newest thing. There are always going to be people who can't stop."

Inspired by a retailer friend who started selling her stores' accessories and jewelry from Facebook using software by a company called Soldsie, a year and a half ago Bonomo decided to market to her 12,000 @skeincocaine followers on Instagram. Soldsie works by allowing

When you consider your own buying behavior, it all starts to make sense. Really, how many of us are purchasing yarn from Amazon?

ALYPSE

How are you preparing for the future of retail?

By Leslie Petrovski

retailers to post photos of merchandise, which customers can purchase seamlessly by typing “sold” and the quantity desired. Soldsie automatically emails a PayPal invoice to the customer, who is given a certain amount of time in which to pay. Once the invoice is paid, the retailer is notified and the order can be filled. “Why wouldn’t I do that with yarn?” she asks.

But Bonomo didn’t want to flood her feed with stuff for sale. Hoping to maintain some entertainment value in her posts, she looked to Soldsie for guidance. Because the company’s analytics show that Instagram is most active on Thursdays at 8 P.M. Eastern time, Bonomo limits her sales on the site to two times per week. Now every Thursday and Friday, Bonomo whips through her store, grabs items that appeal to her in the moment, photographs them with her phone, and posts them at the appropriate times. Featuring lots of eye-popping hand-dyed yarns, the latest accessories and other tantalizing yarny products, the weekly @skeincocaine yarn auctions have been a dazzling success, not only doubling sales for the Wool Workshop but also boosting Bonomo’s Instagram followers and traffic to her online shop.

Thrilled with the results, Bonomo offers some caveats. Not only does she have to pay Soldsie for its service (Soldsie takes only so many retailers per category), but she also has to pay an employee to monitor the auctions in case customers have questions and to fulfill weekly orders, which generates costs for labor, shipping and packaging.

ing. “I’ve doubled my sales by doing it,” she explains, “and it’s helped my cash flow and diversified my way of selling things, but my margins have gone down.”

In recent weeks, too, Bonomo has noticed a leveling of sales, so she has jumped on the next new thing to keep merchandise moving—a video podcast on YouTube. Twelve episodes in at this writing, The Workshop Girls stars Bonomo and her manager Catherine Long, who knit, show off works in progress, and chat unabashedly about knitting, life and new products coming into the store. Underneath the video, Bonomo posts links to their Instagram accounts plus links to the store’s website and Ravelry page. They also promote the YouTube posts on all social media channels. Every time a new episode launches, Bonomo says, the phone starts ringing off the hook.

“All yarn shops around the world should sit down and talk about what’s new to give people a sense of who you are,” Bonomo says of video podcasting. “If you like who we are, you’re more likely to buy from us. People then feel like they aren’t just paying ‘the man’ but are part of a community and are helping someone who’s trying to earn a living.”

Steven Berg’s goal is for his shop to be an essential part of his customers’ lives. “You have your family and your job. I want to be the third place—that place you go where you don’t have to be with the kids or the house or the significant other. You come here to escape.”

SIX WAYS TO NOT BECOME A ZOMBIE POST-RETAILPOCALYPSE

As the retail environment shakes out, who will thrive and who will perish? It may be that small retailers have the edge. Nimble and responsive, you can easily adjust to new trends and provide what customers crave: an authentic, compelling experience. Denver-based artist and designer Lonnie Hanzon, who for 30 years has worked with name-brand retailers creating store environments and displays, says small retailers can be the winners.

“They still can be flexible, program, activate, change, communicate, teach, celebrate and engage,” he explains. “Small retailers can deliver a genuine, live experience. If you look at the most successful retail operations in the world, they are usually a single location and offer many experiences in addition to selling things. Small retailers have social currency that can be used to great effect.”

Consumers buying yarn and patterns have changed, but they’re still buying. To encourage them to buy from you, try the following:

- **Pursue new channels.** Have you invested in a strong e-commerce website? Do you take your show on the road to fiber festivals, craft shows or knitting retreats? Stay local but think global.
- **Define your brand.** Now more than ever, it’s important to brand your shop. Communicate who you are as a store: What is your shop’s personality? What is *your* personality? Are you naughty or nice?
- **Creatively advertise.** To advertise the launch of the shop’s most recent episode

of The Workshop Girls, “In Defense of Squatty Potties Everywhere,” Gina Bonomo of the Wool Workshop posted this click bait: a photo of herself in a pair of fabulous heels, pants down, on the toilet, holding her knitting. “I am trying to find ways to connect with my customers,” Bonomo says. “If that means sharing more about myself and talking about things I probably shouldn’t talk about to get them to feel more connected to me, well.... I don’t filter or edit.”

- **Leverage social media.** Keep your Facebook and Ravelry feeds, but also look to social media channels—blogging, podcasting, Instagram—that allow you to use visual storytelling to get your message out. Make sure that your social media posts reflect your brand personality, too.

- **Make excellent customer service your mantra.** People pull into your parking lot rather than shop online for a reason. “I’ve heard of so many people who aren’t helpful, who don’t greet customers, especially crocheters,” observes

Steven Berg, who owns the former fire-house-cum-yarn-shop StevenBe. “And that’s a shame.” Rather than dismissing an acrylic-accustomed crocheter, he sees the potential. “I just want to be inclusive,” he explains.

“This is a teaching opportunity. I can convert them from a pound of Red Heart to hand-dyed yarn at \$30 a skein.”

- **Offer engaging experiences.** Beyond Knitting 101, what can you offer that will lure your customers away from Netflix and into your shop? Trunk shows? Limited-release yarns? In-store giveaways? A shop retreat? A fiber-related film screening? Book launch event?
- **Distinguish your inventory.** By all means carry workhorse yarns, but also look to goods that will separate you from local and online competitors. Seek out regional indie dyers, knitwear designers, yarn producers and other makers. Consider developing your own products such as kits, subscription boxes, exclusive colors from “it” dyers, logo merchandise, patterns, books, yarn or yarn bowls.

The Net Loft, a yarn and gift shop in Cordova, Alaska, sells a number of its own bags and totes, including a “FisherFolk” waxed canvas shoulder bag and a carryall featuring lupine wildflowers. And at StevenBe, Berg worked with a local potter to develop a mug that says, F*ck off, I’m knitting. “It’s my number-one-selling thing ever,” he says. “I’ve sold more than 1,000. The artist can’t keep up with demand.”



more and more expensive to attend the show because of travel expenses and time off work," says Deborah Jarchow. "Others have said that the classes aren't enticing, so the trip has less value." Karen Smith agrees. "Shows are a big investment for a retailer," she says. "Beyond the travel and lodging costs, there's the time away from the shop." She also notes that when show locations were vacation-friendly—San Diego, for instance—many retailers justified their attendance by blending business with pleasure. Others, encouraged by a generous free-ticket policy that's since ended, brought staffers along as a kind of thank-you treat. "Now it's too expensive to do that," she says.

Smith thinks that networking, once a big reason to go to the show, may seem less necessary in a world in which a phone screen provides instant contact and endless information. "Retailers are finding other ways to connect—social media being the biggest," she says. "Once upon a time you had to go to the show to see what was new and what the editorials for the yarns would be. Now all that information is on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Everyone is trying to work smarter." Jarchow agrees but argues that face-to-face connections are still important: "The show is a wonderful networking opportunity that should not be missed. I think of it as an investment in myself and my business." She adds, "More structured networking events [at the show] might boost attendance."

ONE AND DONE?

A number of retailers and exhibitors less than thrilled with the suite format have broached the idea of dropping to just one show a year. "If [TNNA] is losing money by having two convention shows per year, then yes, one show would be a good thing," posits Jarchow, pointing out that retailers generally attend only one show, based on their location and/or their shop's busy time of year.

Karen Smith, who's been repping yarns for 16 years, is one of those who see potential in such a move—and not just for financial savings. "It's the way the European market does it," she says. "And it works well—those exhibiting sell more yarn in a smaller space. When the focus is on one show, you have more resources to put together an exhibit. Rather than splitting resources between two so-so shows, you can put all the money toward one really good one." A really good show, Smith notes, brings the kind of excitement that gets retailers buying. "If you know it's only coming around once a year, things can feel fresher," she says. "There's more energy on the show floor—that's something that's been lacking at market over the past few years."

Smith admits that her feelings may be skewed by the area she reps—summer yarns aren't big sellers for her Midwestern customers, and most will rely on her visits and trunk shows for those yarns rather than take on the expense of travel and hotel rooms. "It may be different for shops with a summer tourist base," she says, "but still I can't help but think that one really strong show might be better for everyone. It's more exciting, more interesting and maybe more worth it."

Heather Zoppetti says the one-show format was considered but set aside for a number of reasons. "There were several objections," she says. "Some were about location: Many people wanted the summer show to stay in Columbus forever and ever, amen. But the problem with one show forever in one place is that any show—no matter where it is—typically attracts a

figure out the logistics of new city." But she also notes that while Columbus has the ease of the known to it, it's not so easy to get to.

A better one-show solution, she says, would be to pick a hub that's easy to fly in and out, making travel easier for all who choose to attend.

Other objections focused on timing. Sales numbers at the winter show may not be as strong as those in the summer, but they are still sales. "For many vendors, the winter show carries them for the spring," says Zoppetti. "And without those sales, some vendors wouldn't make it." From that standpoint, a smaller second show makes sense. It also addresses the needs of TNNA's needlepoint members. "Yarn's big show is summer, but for needlepoint the big show is winter," Zoppetti points out. "Cutting the winter show would be a terrible disservice to their segment."

HOTEL HOPPING

One concern that's been voiced is the location of the hotels and the distance those who haven't secured rooms at the host hotel will have to travel.

"I have heard some grumbling that the show location and lodging hotels are too far apart for easy walking," says designer Deborah Jarchow. TNNA President Don Lynch says attendees shouldn't worry: "My Google Maps search turned up a one-minute walk to the Red Roof Inn, which is being offered as a budget-friendly option. The Hyatt Place appears to be a five-minute walk, which is much quicker than the walk I've had from the Hyatt in Columbus."

certain radius of retailer attendees. When the show stays in one city, the same attendees come again and again, but retailers from other regions never attend."

The solution to that issue is an obvious one: rotate the show's location from year to year, giving different regions a chance to attend a market that's closer to home. But the popularity of dropping to one show a year seems to go hand in hand with a permanent location. "When the idea of moving from place to place came up, people who were pro one show started rethinking their stance," says Zoppetti. Many retailers, it seems, like the idea of one show, but only if the location is a constant.

Karen Smith is sympathetic to that view, understanding that comfort with a location can be a key factor in the decision to attend. "People like knowing where they're going to stay, how the cabs operate, where to eat and what's around," she says. "It can be intimidating to have

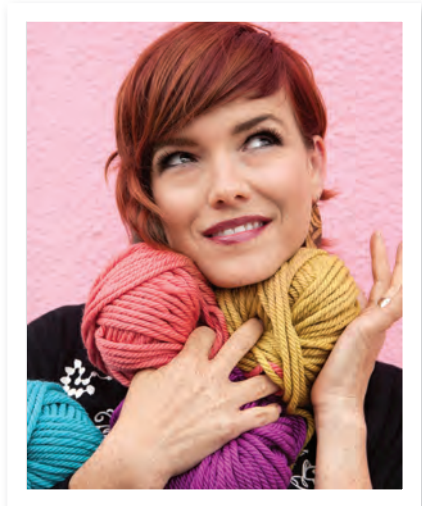
FUTURE PERFORMANCES

There will no doubt be a few missed steps on the first run of the new format, but nothing ever runs perfectly on opening night. There will be edits that need to be made along the way. Don Lynch is confident that two shows with two different formats are the way to go and may be the key to revamping interest. "Personally, I think variety is good. If each show is allowed to develop its own personality and flavor, it can keep people engaged," he says. "Our current plans are to assess the successes and any failures of this show, make the necessary adjustments and move forward."

Advice for any critic is to wait for the final curtain before writing the review. "The changes will be interesting to see," says Jarchow. "I'm reserving

judgment on whether it will improve the experience or not. I have not attended a trade show in this format before, so I have no basis for comparison, but I am eager to see how it works." She's not alone. The show is well ahead of 2017 numbers in vendor and attendee registrants, and vendor rooms and booths are close to full. Rooms for attendees were sold out at the host hotel as this issue went to press. "I'm confident that attendee numbers will be strong," says Zoppetti. "I hope that yarn retailers understand that this is not just a needlepoint show and really take a good look at the exhibitor list to see all the great yarn vendors attending."

Jarchow's advice is just to take it all in and reflect and revise later. "Anything new takes some getting used to for regular attendees," she says. "The new location, combined with the new format, may be causing some consternation. Best to keep an open mind to see how it all works out."



After years of watching Vickie Howell move through the yarn industry as a seemingly unstoppable force, Erin Slonaker sat down with the yarnpreneur to learn about her latest venture, the YouTube series *The Knit Show*.

YMN: How did you learn to knit/crochet, what about it spoke to you?

VH: I learned both when I was 8. Crochet stuck—I loved making doll blankets out of granny squares. Knitting, though—I was not at all into it. I think maybe my little hands weren't dexterous enough yet. I found the craft frustrating and moved on to other things, like crafting, sewing, jewelry making.

Cut to almost 20 years later, when knitting was seeing a resurgence in popularity. It was 2001, and I was pregnant with my second son. My friend Tracy convinced me to go to this popular store in Studio City [California] called La Knitterie Parisienne. When I walked in, I was greeted not only by gorgeous yarns I didn't know existed but also a table of women sitting, knitting and having great conversations about life and current events. It clicked for me right then and there: creativity and community, that's what knitting had to offer me. I picked up my knitting needles that day and haven't put them down since.

YMN: You've had several careers, not all of them in knitting. What led you to where you are now?

VH: [Laughs] It seems like I've had several ca-

reers, but there have really been only two. My first was in the entertainment industry. I worked on a talk show, at production companies and at one of the "big three" talent agencies. I was on track to be a TV producer. When I was in my mid-twenties, though, I was laid off following a merger. I was also pregnant. I decided to stay home with the baby and figure it out from there.

“ I HAD TO MOVE TO AUSTIN TO GET A JOB IN L.A. ”

As you can imagine, there was a bit of a culture shock going from a demanding career to being alone all day with a tiny human. I needed a creative outlet, but also something that felt like a business. I started an online site called Mamarama, where I sold “hip handmade goods for mamas and their wee ones.” This was way before blogs, social media or Etsy—there were literally only about ten craft sites at the time. It wasn't a viable business, but it put me out there in this world of creative entrepreneurs and also, along with the stitch-and-bitch groups I founded in L.A. and, later, Austin, a much needed community.

To make a long story even longer, my then-husband and I decided to move to his hometown, Austin. One day, I got an e-mail from a Hollywood producer. “Dear Sir or Madam,” it said, “Do you know anyone who would be interested in auditioning to become the host of a TV show focused on knitting?” I kid you not. She had done a web search for “young, hip knitter” and came across the logo for my stitch-and-bitch group. My time at the talent agency taught me how to pitch, and I had my very first design—a guitar strap—up on knitty.com, so I called the producer and showed her what I could do. She asked if I would fly myself to L.A. to audition. When the universe drops an opportunity like *Knitty Gritty* in your lap, you owe it to the kismet gods to run with it. That's what I've tried to do ever since—through writing books, developing content, acting as a creativity ambassador, designing accessible projects, broadcasting through multiple platforms, and creating a TV-quality knitting and crochet lifestyle series that encourages a love of global community.

YMN: What is it about those who create that you find interesting?

VH: I'm fascinated by the fact that unlike other professions, there isn't just one discernible path to becoming a creator. You can have a master's degree in fine arts or a GED and still run in the same circles because of your passion, experience and talent. I love hearing creators' origin stories, which is why I started the podcast CRAFT*ish—to could explore the career paths of everyone from fashion designers to musicians. There's an

intangible common thread among creative types. It's a beautiful puzzle I'm trying to figure out.

YMN: *The Knit Show* was funded by Kickstarter. Why choose that route and not a more traditional source of funding?

VH: The short answer is that there really weren't a lot of options. The longer answer is that I saw a need for us all—on both the craft yarn and independent yarn sides of the aisle—to band together

to take control of a climate that for many years has not been fortuitous. I believed one company should not hold a majority share in the show. I needed to create a level playing field, one where large craft stores and tiny indie dyers would both feel at home. I also knew that what makes our industry thrive is community, one that now, thanks to social media, spans continents. I concluded that the only way to engage that community and the industry behind it was to get them all involved. To make a project for and with them.

YMN: What's it like to make an entire TV show for YouTube? Take us behind the scenes.

VH: It's exhausting but exciting. The pace was quicker than a network show: only about four months from crowdfunding to “prime yarn time.” We had to start field-piece segments immediately and schedule a tight, carefully preproduced studio shoot, which meant filming two episodes per day for five days straight. But not having a network/studio behind us meant we didn't have to follow anybody else's rules, which was exciting. We could be creative in execution and crafty with making things. Content producer Karin Strom [former YMN editor in chief] and I had produced together before, on *Knitting Daily*. Because of that, we could immediately fall into step. When you're working on the first season of any DIY show, it's important to cater to beginners through intermediate knitters. We started by picking project-based and technique- or trend-focused themes, then plugged in proposed expert guests. Our guests were willing to roll the dice on this experiment by coming to Austin in the middle of summer to film a show about wool!

YMN: You've had your own yarn lines, a podcast, TV shows.... What's next for you?

VH: Why, do you know anyone who's hiring? Kidding! Seriously, though, I'm always open to opportunities. I'm currently working on *The Knit Show* book. And, of course, I'm hoping to produce future seasons of the show. In the meantime, I'm spending as much time as possible promoting it, and the rest doing that crafty hustle that we professional creators know so well.



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