



## COME ONE, COME ALL

Is your shop as inclusive and welcoming as it can be?

## ARE YOU OPEN?

Why you should consider location when deciding your shop's hours.

## AS THE WOOL TURNS

Questions about wool? Clara Parkes sets the record straight.

MAY 2019

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## Inclusion

### *A long-awaited conversation about diversity*

and inclusion has been taking place throughout the yarn community since the beginning of this year. Our industry is not alone in being confronted with the topic, as the world at large is grappling with this issue as well. SoHo Publishing LLC, parent company of both *YMN* and *Vogue Knitting*, recently issued a statement reiterating its commitment to driving the industry and our company toward inclusion and diversity. The first step is a diversity council; we will update you on further developments as they happen. We at *Yarn Market News* have long highlighted the diversity within our craft, featuring articles on all the different ways you can use yarn, and we are committed to further highlighting the many diverse people who work in our industry as well. Yarn stores are the front line of leading the industry's social change, and to that end I asked Cecilia Nelson-Hurt, Diversity Equity and Inclusion practitioner for L'Oréal USA and an avid knitter (and who was in my knitting group when I first moved to New York City), to speak on promoting diversity in your store.

Diversity isn't the only topic that we know shop owners are dealing with—of late, it seems there is a veritable war on wool, being waged mostly by PETA, but the message is getting out, and misinformation is rampant. Clara Parkes, wool-whisperer *extraordinaire*, has written a feature on the most-asked questions related to wool these days. Her answers reveal all the truths that you and your customers need to know.

There's plenty more in this issue, of course, from setting your store's hours and selling on Instagram to the fuzzy yarns that will be just the thing come fall. This issue was the last that Editorial Director Trisha Malcolm helped me plan; I'd like to take a moment to thank her for all she's done for *Yarn Market News* since this reincarnation debuted exactly 60 issues ago. She helped bring it back, and she championed it to advertisers, subscribers and the industry as a whole over the past 14 years. She's been a personal mentor and friend as well and was always eager to bounce ideas around with me for the almost nine years that I've been with the magazine.

This issue will also be the last for Managing Editor Leslie Barber, who has been the driving force that got every one of those 60 issues put together so flawlessly. She's smoothed my writing and performed the heroic feat of fitting all the book reviews across a spread—and she even helps me write headlines (she's great with a pun). I wish her all the best in her next venture and hope she knows that she will be greatly missed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erin".

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



### on the cover

Twirl up some Universal Yarn Bella Chenille! This 100 percent polyester super-bulky is soft and squishy and comes in 21 colors. [www.universalyarn.com](http://www.universalyarn.com)

Photograph by Marcus Tullis



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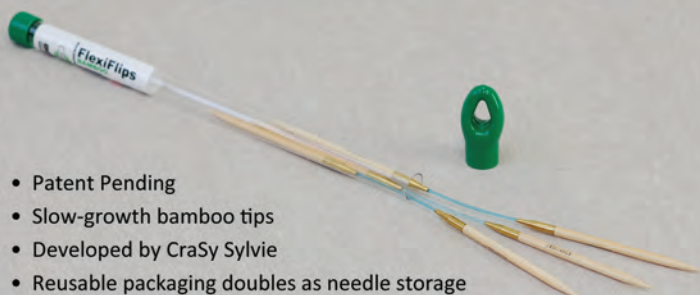
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## FIFTY YEARS OF **SCHACHT**

Clap your hand carders together in celebration of **Schacht Spindle Company's** 50th anniversary. The Boulder, Colorado-based company, known for producing covetable spinning and weaving tools, will officially celebrate on September 20 with a Fab 50 Anniversary Party featuring a factory open house, spin-in, "shuttle car" race, warping duel, exhibits, vendors, a guest lecture by Weavers School founder Madelyn van der Hoogt and a ceremony recognizing spinning and weaving influencers over the past five decades.

"We want to celebrate the community of weavers and spinners, because we wouldn't be here if it weren't for them," explains Jane Patrick, creative director at Schacht, who's married to co-founder Barry Schacht. "We will honor a few people who have made big contributions over the past 50 years, and we're centering that on education, because that's the critical thing: If you don't have good teaching, you don't have a craft anymore."



Founded in 1969 by brothers Barry and Dan Schacht as part of the back-to-nature movement of the 1960s, Schacht Spindle Company started with an order for 200 drop spindles. Today, the company is housed in a 35,000-square-foot factory and employs 50 people, manufacturing some of the most highly regarded tools in the industry, including the Matchless spinning wheel, the Baby Wolf loom and the Sidekick folding spinning wheel—all on the outskirts of Boulder.

To commemorate its golden anniversary, Schacht has released limited-edition products, among them a double-treadle cherry-wood Matchless wheel, cherry Wolf looms, a Polwarth/tussah-silk-fiber braid dyed by SweetGeorgia Yarns and boat shuttles in anniversary colors, and 50th logo merchandise. Watch too for special happenings throughout the rest of 2019, such as spin-and-weave-alongs, Instagram giveaways, dealer deals and an educational dealer weekend that kicks off with the 50th soiree.

"After five years, 50 percent all new businesses are gone; they just don't survive," Patrick says. "But not only are we here, we're strong, and that's a lot to celebrate." To learn more about Schacht and its history, visit [schachtspindle.com/50years](http://schachtspindle.com/50years).

In 2015, after **Jeanne Carver**, owner (with her husband Dan) of Imperial Stock Ranch in Shaniko, Oregon, sold Imperial Yarn, the Carvers lost a grandson. Shouldering caregiving responsibilities for her ailing husband and additional duties associated with the ranch's meat business as well, Jeanne Carver yearned to return to the wool business she loved so much. "I had to do something positive for my spirit," she says, "and decided to rebirth my efforts to support American wool."

Because of contractual terms laid out when she sold Imperial Yarn, Carver was prohibited from reentering the yarn business or selling Imperial Stock Ranch wool into the market. She could, however, buy wool from neighboring ranches with sustainable practices and leverage her connections with processors to provide companies with a traceable domestic supply chain from fleece to finished object. In honor of a nearby ghost town, a once-bustling railroad hub that shuttled tons of regional wool back East,



Carver named her new endeavor **Shaniko** ("shawn-E-ko") Wool Company.

"Every week I get calls from brands or factories that want a traceable wool supply," she says. "I see companies frustrated with this over and over again." This new business model not only allows Carver to maintain her commitments at the ranch; it also makes it possible for her to keep her

hands in the wool business, helping companies source domestic wool for hand-knitting or industrial yarn as well as made-in-the-USA finished apparel and home goods. "If someone wants yarn, I can bring yarn," she says. "If someone wants blankets, I can bring blankets, because I have relationships throughout the supply chain." Learn more at [shanikowoolcompany.com](http://shanikowoolcompany.com).



# KNITTING AWAY **THE BLUES**

For those who view knitting as self-care, **Lorna Hamilton-Brown's** short film *Knitting the Blues* is a YouTube must-see. The second of Hamilton-Brown's films to be chosen by the U.K.-based Craft Council for its Real to Reel Film Festival, which was held in May, the film follows the pompom-wig bedecked "Lady Yarnarella" as she struggles to overcome depression and anxiety using knitting as therapy. Designers Jeanette Sloan, Brandon Mably, Laduma Ngxokolo and Kaffe Fassett make cameo appearances in the music video.

Inspired by *Knit for Health and Wellness* author Betsan Corkhill's research on the mental and physical benefits of knitting and her own experience with knitting's positive effects, Hamilton-Brown completed the short music video as her final project for her master's degree in knitted textiles at the Royal College of Art.

"Making this film gave me the opportunity to showcase the different skills I have—illustration, knitwear design, song writing, photography/video, video editing

and performance—and raise awareness of mental health, which is a cause dear to my heart," she says.

For the project, Hamilton-Brown designed a small stuffed bird her character knits in the film, called a Tension Bird, so named because it provides comfort and is fashioned from a gauge or tension swatch. In the fall, she will offer a mental health-focused Tension Bird workshop with mental health advocate Penny Jarrett and the Black Girl Knit Club. Later in the year, she will release the pattern for a charity knitting event she's organizing to raise funds for Hospital Rooms, a U.K. mental health charity, which brings world-class art to mental health hospitals. To learn more about Hamilton-Brown's work and view *Knitting the Blues*, visit [lornahamiltonbrown.com/portfolio-items/knitting-the-blues](http://lornahamiltonbrown.com/portfolio-items/knitting-the-blues).



## TIP-OFFS AND TOPPERS

Inspired by Stitch n' Pitch and similar efforts designed to generate interest and lure crafters into sports fandom, the Indiana Pacers are rallying stitchers to bust out 5,000 beanies to warm the heads of volunteers, hospitality workers and VIPs involved in the 2021 NBA All-Star Game in Indianapolis. Brent Rockwood, senior vice president of corporate community and public relations for Pacers Sports and Entertainment, explains that the Pacers based their **Nothing But Knit** initiative on popular scarf-stitching programs launched by the Special Olympics and Super Scarves, which solicited scarves for Indianapolis Super Bowl volunteers in 2012.

The idea, he says, is to showcase Hoosier hospitality to a global audience and engage crafty basketball fans and non-basketball fans in the run-up to the big game. Even basketball great Larry Bird, former president of operations for the Pacers, is wielding a pair of sticks to contribute to the effort. "We want to make this more than a game," Rockwood says. "It's a fun way for our community to come together to showcase Indiana hospitality."

To encourage cast-ons, the Pacers are hosting free Knit at a Pacers Game nights, which provide knitters and crocheters with complimentary tickets and beanie kits to work on during the games. The team has also hosted KALs at a local brewery, as well as an Open Knitting Night at Indy's Mass Ave Knit Shop. Pacers fans who live farther afield can contribute by downloading free beanie patterns from the Pacers website and sending them in. As of early May, the Pacers had already logged 1,000 lids. To stay on top of upcoming events and the current beanie count, visit [nba.com/pacers/nothing-knit-2021](http://nba.com/pacers/nothing-knit-2021).





## MAKE DO AND MEND POST-MILLENNIUM STYLE

With everyone “kondoing” their closets and “Swedish death cleaning” their stashes, Amy Twigger Holroyd’s **ReKnit Revolution** might be the slow-fashion solution to what happens next. Long interested in fashion sustainability—she started a small-batch knitwear brand in the 2000s called Keep & Share, producing knits designed for longevity and versatility—Holroyd wanted to explore her ideas about enduring fashion further. As a Ph.D. student at Birmingham City University, she completed research that became the basis for her first book, *Folk Fashion: Understanding Homemade Clothes*, and for ReKnit Revolution, an ongoing project on how to make old sweaters new again.

Showcased in a major solo exhibition at Rugby Museum and Art Gallery in 2017, ReKnit Revolution has one needle in Britain’s make-do-and-mend movement from the Second World War and the other in today’s world of overconsumption. Instead of giving in to a “fast fashion” impulse to buy the latest trend, knitters and crocheters can update existing sweaters. “We live in such a different environmental and social context now,” Holroyd explains. “We’re

reconnecting with practices from the past but we’re doing them for different reasons. During WWII there was no alternative. Now

Holroyd explains. “You can unravel it completely, but a lot of my work involves fairly minimal changes working with a section of a garment and reworking what’s already there.” Three of the ReKnit techniques—replace cuff, stitch-hack and cardiganize—are documented in-depth on [reknitrevolution.org](http://reknitrevolution.org) with how-to videos, tips, supporting techniques and even ratios for augmenting commercially knit garments using hand-knitting yarns.

Holroyd plans to continue adding techniques to the ReKnit website and offers occasional workshops when her schedule as a faculty member at Nottingham Trent University permits. “Within sustainable fashion, we need to find ways to slow down our consumption but still feel engaged with



it’s a choice because we all have too much.”

The ReKnit spectrum offers 12 techniques for reworking hand knits that include “cardiganizing” a pullover and stitch-hacking, which involves opening part of a row, creating a new stitch pattern and grafting it shut. Other strategies include inserting a goglet for flare, adding duplicate stitches or incorporating a pocket.

“The aim of the reknitting work is to showcase a broad range of processes where you could reknit a garment to rework it,”

fashion and continue the satisfaction of connecting through clothes,” she says. “I see so much potential in the world of knitting and the skills of knitters to reorient their practices to include reworking things as much as they do making new things and establish that as a regular part of a home-knitting practice.”

To learn more about Holroyd’s work, visit [amytwiggerholroyd.com](http://amytwiggerholroyd.com). She’s also written hand-knitting patterns for her previous knitting business, Keep & Share, that are available on Ravelry.

## ZEALANA REDUX

It’s time to bid the yarn brand **Zealana** a huge “Kia ora.” Officially relaunching at TNNA in June, the New Zealand brand has been largely unavailable in the United States and Canada for about a year, following its purchase by Australia-based wholesaler Extraordinary Yarns, which bought the line in 2017 when yarn inventories were low.

“It’s taken longer to restock than we thought,” explains Stephen Dowling, managing director of Extraordinary Yarns. “Some components have been difficult to source, and we were not looking to rush



in because we didn’t want to lose quality.”

Known for luxury blends, especially yarns made from New Zealand-grown merino wool, brushtail possum and other premium fibers, Zealana’s products are still spun in New Zealand by Woolyarns Limited, the mill that originated the brand. Currently, there are 12 yarns in the range, including the popular Air, a pill-resistant product fashioned from cashmere, brushtail possum down and mulberry silk, and Rimu, a washable merino/brushtail possum blend. New products in the pipeline are a

Zealana baby line with pattern support by U.K.-based designer Sue Bately-Kyle and a 100 percent New Zealand wool yarn.

“We’re excited about the whole process,” Dowling says. “It’s such beautiful yarn. There is nothing like it in the world.” To learn more, visit [zealana.com](http://zealana.com).



## DYE YOUNG



Two years ago, when **Emma Dobratz**, then a 15-year-old homeschooler, finished her math-and-science project on proportions, she didn't consign the knowledge to long-term memory. Instead, she started a yarn company.

The math lesson, conceived by her mother, Laura Dobratz, owner of Four Purls Yarn Shop in Winter Haven, Florida, was to dye some yarn, and Emma took to it like a sheep to grass. "It was fun and different, and none of my friends were doing it," Emma explains. "I love color and matching colors up; it was super fun for me."

"She was selling the small batches she was dyeing in our parents' yarn store," adds her older sister, Aspen, who joined Emma to grow the business after graduating from college. "It was a big hit and she kept doing it because it was enjoyable."

Today, Emma's Yarn offers five yarn bases and more than 50 colorways with cheeky

names like Just Add Salt, Ice Ice Baby, Kale and Vacay. Some of the colors are subdued, like the tonal grays of Jackie O, while others are more vibrant, like '80s Rewind, with its splashes of neon.

Emma's Yarn has about 20 wholesale accounts around the country, and Mom carries all colors in all the bases in her yarn shop. Though Emma and Aspen do a handful of shows a year to boost visibility and will soon be vending at TNNA for the first time, they don't retail from their website, preferring to remain LYS-friendly. "We promote the brand at those shows," Aspen explains, "and we want to get our name out there. But we want to support local yarn shops."

Now 17, Emma is looking at colleges but hasn't decided yet what she wants to do. "No matter what," Aspen says, "we'll still be dyeing yarn because it's something that can be done anywhere." To check out Emma's Yarn, visit [emmasyarn.com](http://emmasyarn.com).



## END OF AN ERA

After more than 20 years at the helm of *Vogue Knitting* and many of the other properties that make up SoHo Publishing, including *Yarn Market News*, Vice President and Editorial Director Trisha Malcolm has taken her project bag across the pond to MEZ Crafts, where she will serve as executive brand strategist. "Trisha is so passionate about knitting and knows so much about yarn and fashion," observes Carla Scott, who worked with Malcolm for more than 20 years and was recently named *Vogue Knitting* editor in chief. "She put her whole heart and soul into her work, and it showed."

Malcolm began her professional career as a high school teacher in Australia before moving into craft publishing, where she served as craft editor for *Family Circle* magazine. In 1996, she moved to New York, where she became an editor at Butterick, which at the time published *Vogue Knitting*, *Family Circle Easy Knitting*, *Jo-Ann Magazine* and *Vogue* and Butterick sewing patterns.



Trisha Malcolm



Carla Scott

In 2001, when the newly formed SoHo Publishing Company took on Butterick's fiber titles, Malcolm joined the company as editorial director. Her work over two decades helped establish *Vogue Knitting* as the go-to periodical for on-trend knits, creating the suite of in-person branded events and championing the careers of countless hand-knitting designers. "She has a knack for knowing what is going to be the next big thing," Scott says. "She was behind our move into social media, selling patterns online, getting *Vogue Knitting LIVE!* up and running and leading the redesign of the magazine. She was the face of *Vogue Knitting* for so long."

She was also the editorial director of *Yarn Market News*. Says Editor in Chief Erin Slonaker, "Trisha's passion and interest in all things yarn was a guiding force behind *Yarn Market News*, and she will be greatly missed."

Working for MEZ Crafts, Malcolm will be dividing her time between the United States, Germany and the U.K. and holding sway over such brands as Rowan, Patons, Schachenmayr, Regia, Anchor and Milward.



## NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE **POWER** OF AN ANGRY **LYSO**

Pearl Chin was angry. After the February 14, 2018, shootings at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where 17 died, the owner of New York's Knitty City wanted to do more than stitch and bitch. "Guns came up in the conversation," she says. "We have a very open store. We're in New York and people are all loud-mouthed. Eventually, you can't just talk. You have to do something."

The "something" turned out to be **Moms and Makers**, a spring artisan and indie yarn market held the Saturday before Mother's Day, May 12, 2018, at the The Loft at W83 Ministry Center on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, with proceeds going to benefit Moms Demand Action



for Gun Sense in America, an organization that seeks to protect people from gun violence. All in all, Chin reported, the event raised about \$4,500 for Moms Demand Action.

The event was so successful, Chin decided on a reprise. In May, yarn shops throughout the city donated to the event, along with companies including Berroco and Cascade Yarns. The market featured 30 vendors selling pottery, jewelry and hand-dyed yarn, a silent auction, raffle, bake sale and voter registration.

For Chin, the effort is about building community and making a difference. "I never go in thinking I'm going to make money from these things. Then what good is it?" she says. "You can't limit yourself, but need to think: 'How far can I go with an idea?'" Learn more at [knittycitynyc.com](http://knittycitynyc.com).

## REAL COLORS

When Karen Templer of the online accessories shop Fringe Supply Co. blogged about an upcoming trip to India, she wrote about how 2019 was going to be her "year of color," how she was going to conquer her reticence to travel internationally and take more risks. "If I can go to India, I can do anything—I'm pretty sure," she posted. "(Honest to god, I was listening to an interview on NPR the other day about the inevitability and nearness of colonizing Mars, and I was like 'I'd book a seat for that.' Ha!)"

After publishing this to her blog and Instagram, the comments started rolling in, some celebrating her trip, others pointing out that she was exoticizing the country, invoking its painful colonial past and comparing India to Mars. As one commenter noted, "Instead of your 'year of color' being about wearing brighter clothing, why don't you make 2019 investing in contributing to people of color, buying their art, listening to their podcasts, following them, contributing money to them, buying literature written by POC." After initially defending her post in comments, Templer apologized.

On Instagram, debate over Templer's post exploded as long-simmering resentment about racism and the lack of diversity in the fiber arts community boiled over. Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOCs) weighed in with reports of being ignored or followed in yarn shops, blatantly insulted and made to feel unwelcome in white knitting groups, and how they see few people who look like them among designers, models and vendors in the industry.

Since the conversation sparked in January, it's continued both within and beyond the craft yarn world. The *New Yorker* online ran a piece, as did the websites Vox, Quillette and Medium. There have been active Reddit threads, Tweets, statements by yarn companies and retailers and angry exchanges on social media.

But there's also been change. For the first time, the Edinburgh Yarn Festival, in March, hosted a discussion on the subject, "Diversity and Inclusion in the Fibre Space: Where Do We Go From Here." (Watch a recording of the video at [edinyarnfest.com/diversity-inclusion-talk](http://edinyarnfest.com/diversity-inclusion-talk).) BIPOC yarn dyers and designers have seen their Instagram numbers blossom as stitchers become more aware of their feeds. Four BIPOC fiber artists have launched a website and blog, Unfinished Object ([unfinishedobject.com](http://unfinishedobject.com)), to explore how "diversity becomes inclusion" and "how we can serve our joy while being meaningfully present in our truths—in the fibre world and beyond."

Popular surface designer and BIPOC Jen Hewett, who has collaborated on Fringe Field Bag designs with Templer, announced that she's writing her second book, tentatively titled *The Craft Community: Conversations with Crafters of Color*. The Yarnery in St. Paul, Minnesota, has started a "knit night for everyone" called One Yarn that specifically invites BIPOC and LGBTQIA stitchers and their allies to bring in any type of portable fiber craft and connect. Other groups are in the exploratory stages of creating inclusive knitting retreats.

"I'm happy this situation happened," observed Diane Ivey, BIPOC founder of Lady Dye Yarns, who in 2015 wrote a blog post, "The Lack of Diversity in the Yarn Industry," calling out the lack of diversity on magazine covers and in the content as well as in the speakers and vendors at trade and consumer shows. "The industry needs to look internally within its organizations and ask, 'Are we being inclusive and diverse in our employees and products and people we advertise to?' It's happening all over fashion and tech. If you want to survive in any industry, you have to stay current. You can't look to the past but to the future, which is going to be more diverse, inclusive and open."



## June 14–16

### Iowa Sheep and Wool Festival

Hansen Agriculture Student  
Learning Center  
Ames, Iowa  
[iowasheepandwoolfestival.com](http://iowasheepandwoolfestival.com)

## June 14–16

### Sheep Is Life Celebration

Diné College North Campus  
Shiprock, New Mexico  
Navajo Nation  
[navajolifeway.org/sheep-is-life](http://navajolifeway.org/sheep-is-life)

## June 19–23

### TNNA Summer Trade Show

Huntington Convention Center  
Cleveland, Ohio  
[tnna.org](http://tnna.org)

## June 21–23

### Houston Fiber Fest

The Berry Center  
Cypress, Texas  
[houstonfiberfest.com](http://houstonfiberfest.com)

## June 21–25

### Camp Stitches: New Mexico

Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa  
Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico  
[knittinguniverse.com/CampNewMexico](http://knittinguniverse.com/CampNewMexico)

## July 5–7

### Black Sheep Fiber Gathering

Linn County Expo Center  
Albany, Oregon  
[blacksheepgathering.org](http://blacksheepgathering.org)

## July 10–13

### Crochet Guild of America Chain Link Conference

Manchester, New Hampshire  
[crochet.org](http://crochet.org)

## July 12–21

### Great Northern Arts Festival

Inuvik, Northwest Territories

Canada

[gnaf.org](http://gnaf.org)

## July 19–21

### Natural Fiber Extravaganza

Wilson County Exposition Center  
Nashville, Tennessee  
[alpacainfo.com/fiber-extravaganza](http://alpacainfo.com/fiber-extravaganza)

## August 1–4

### Stitches Midwest

Schaumburg Renaissance and  
Convention Center  
Schaumburg, Illinois  
[knittinguniverse.com/midwest2019](http://knittinguniverse.com/midwest2019)

## August 2–4

### Fiberfest Eureka!

Lincoln County Fairgrounds  
Eureka, Montana  
[eurekafiberfest.org](http://eurekafiberfest.org)

## August 3–4

### Fiber Arts Festival

Red River Valley Fairgrounds  
West Fargo, North Dakota  
[fiberartsfest.com](http://fiberartsfest.com)

## August 14–18

### Twist Fibre Festival

Complexe Whissell  
Saint-Andre-Avellin, Quebec, Canada  
[festivaltwist.org](http://festivaltwist.org)

## August 16–18

### Michigan Fiber Festival

Allegan County Fairgrounds  
Allegan, Michigan  
[michiganfiberfestival.info](http://michiganfiberfestival.info)

## August 18

### Fibrations 2019

Fairfield Community Center  
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada  
[kbnfibres.ca/fibrations](http://kbnfibres.ca/fibrations)

## September 6–8

### Wisconsin Sheep and Wool Festival

Jefferson County Fair Park  
Jefferson, Wisconsin  
[wisconsinsheepandwoolfestival.com](http://wisconsinsheepandwoolfestival.com)

## September 7–8

### Natural Fiber Fair

Arcata Community Center  
Arcata, California  
[naturalfiberfair.com](http://naturalfiberfair.com)

## September 7–8

### Garden State Sheep and Fiber Festival

Hunterdon County Fairgrounds  
Ringoes, New Jersey  
[njsheep.net](http://njsheep.net)

## September 7–8

### Pennsylvania Endless Mountains Fiber Festival

Harford Fairgrounds  
New Milford, Pennsylvania  
[endlessmountainsfiberfest.com](http://endlessmountainsfiberfest.com)

## September 7–8

### Salida Fiber Festival

Riverside Park  
Salida, Colorado  
[salidafiberfestival.com](http://salidafiberfestival.com)

## September 13–14

### Manitoba Fibre Festival

Red River Exhibition Park  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
[manitobafibrefestival.com](http://manitobafibrefestival.com)

## September 14

### Olde Liberty Fiber Festival

Bedford Breakfast Lions Club  
Bedford, Virginia  
[olfibrefaire.com](http://olfibrefaire.com)

## September 20–21

### Fiber Daze

River Bend Hotel & Casino  
Wyandotte, Oklahoma  
[fiberfolksofswmo.com/fiber-daze-2019](http://fiberfolksofswmo.com/fiber-daze-2019)

## September 21–22

### Finger Lakes Fiber Festival

Hemlock Fairgrounds  
Hemlock, New York  
[gvhg.org/fiber-fest](http://gvhg.org/fiber-fest)

## September 21–22

### Sneffels Fiber Festival

4-H Events Center  
Ouray County Fairgrounds  
Ridgway, Colorado  
[sneffelsfiberfest.com](http://sneffelsfiberfest.com)

## September 26–28

### Fiber Fun in the 'Sip

Vicksburg Convention Center  
Vicksburg, Mississippi  
[fiberfuninthesip.com](http://fiberfuninthesip.com)

## September 28–29

### Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival

Clackamas County Event Center  
Canby, Oregon  
[flockandfiberfestival.com](http://flockandfiberfestival.com)

## September 28–29

### Shenandoah Valley Fiber Festival

Clarke County Ruritan Fairgrounds  
Berryville, Virginia  
[shenandoahvalleyfiberfestival.com](http://shenandoahvalleyfiberfestival.com)

## September 28–29

### Northern Michigan Lamb and Wool Festival

Ogemaw County Fairgrounds,  
West Branch, Michigan  
[lambandwoolfestival.com](http://lambandwoolfestival.com)

## F+W MEDIA FILES CHAPTER 11

**F+W Media**, owner of *Interweave*, filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code in March. The media conglomerate, which publishes *Writer's Digest* along with a host of craft-focused periodicals including *Interweave Knits*, *Interweave Crochet*, *Spin-Off* and *Knitscene*, among others, is working to sell company assets to pay creditors.

The March 10 bankruptcy filing outlined a litany of corporate woes, from lagging magazine revenues to catastrophic technology investments that prompted various rounds of restructuring and strategic realignments. Under CEO Gregory Osberg, who assumed leadership of the company in 2018, F+W moved away from its resource-intensive e-commerce focus, laid off employees and

launched new digital ventures. "Ultimately," Osberg wrote, "the Company determined that the only viable alternative, which would allow it to survive while providing relief from its obligations, was to pursue a sale transaction within the context of a Chapter 11 filing."

To facilitate the process, F+W is selling the company in two chunks: its "communities business line," which includes print, digital media and e-commerce across 10 enthusiast categories ("crafts" being the largest "community") and its book business line, which publishes about 120 new titles annually and has a 2,100-book backlist. The filing reported that the company had hoped to sell the book business by the end of May and "communities" by the middle of June.



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**Finished Measurements:** 14" wide by 30" circumference.  
**Materials:** Koigu Cookie Jar (30 assorted skeinettes), 330yds/300m, 4mm straight needles, stitch markers, tapestry needles.

**Gauge:** 22 sts = 4" over pattern.  
[www.koigu.com](http://www.koigu.com)



## LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT



**Minikins**, new from Freia Fine Handpaints: Shawl Balls get small! Just over 100 yards of mulesing-free single-ply U.S. merino fingering in a 1-ounce mini cake. Perfect for Fair Isle colorwork, trim details or small projects. Combine colors for scarves, mitts, cowls or hats. Available in 6-packs of a single gradient colorway or in 9-packs of coordinated gradient palettes. MSRP \$14/ball. [www.freiafibers.com](http://www.freiafibers.com)

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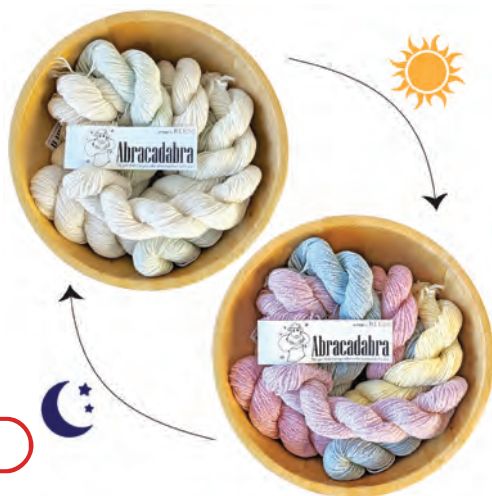
**Natural Alpaca DK** (109yds/100m), deliciously soft 100% superfine alpaca from Peru, is ideal for luxury garments, accessories and more. Available in a stunning range of 8 warm, undyed natural colors. Tension: 22 sts/28 rows. Needles: 4mm/U.S. 6. Hand wash only. Supported by 6 patterns. Will knit to any King Cole DK pattern. 12x50g skein pack. [www.kingcole.com](http://www.kingcole.com)





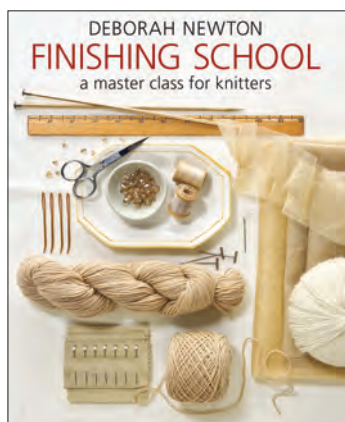
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## ▼ Knitting Modular Shawls, Wraps and Stoles

**By Melissa Leapman**  
**Storey Publishing; \$32**  
**ISBN: 978-1612129969**

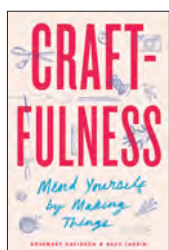
The author calls this book the plug-and-play of shawl making. What has historically taken knitwear designers hours of meticulous math to devise, she has streamlined into seven steps. And once her basic piece-together theory is grasped, knitters of all skill levels can create one-of-a-kind designs—simple, intricate and everything in between.

Choose a silhouette, stitch pattern, background texture, edging, cast-on tab, border and bind-off—or one of the 20 patterns provided—and just add yarn. Even if you never design a shawl yourself, the 185 stitch charts make this a useful addition to every stitch-dictionary collection.

## ▼ Craftfulness: Mend Yourself by Making Things

**By Rosemary Davidson and Arzu Tahsin**  
**Harper Wave; \$23.99**  
**ISBN: 978-0062883544**

Crafting mojo a little depleted? *Craftfulness* aims to invigorate the stalled artisan, whether that lull is caused by self-doubt, time constraints, a chaotic or nonexistent workspace or rusty skills. Knowing that makers can often get caught up



in finishing that sweater or pottery or woven textile, the book offers ways to put the focus back on the doing and on the part of the mind that gets wonderfully lost in the process of creating. While not a traditional pattern book, there is a section devoted to primers for knitting (a moss-stitch scarf), weaving (including how to build a mini starter loom) and bookbinding, because trying a new craft just might jumpstart makings of all kinds.

## ▼ Saltwater Mittens From the Island of Newfoundland

**By Christine LeGrow and Shirley A. Scott**  
**Boulder Books; \$29.95**  
**ISBN: 978-1775234586**

With the rich history and intricate



colorwork of vintage mittens they collected in Newfoundland over the past forty years as their muse, the authors have re-created more than 20 heritage patterns for full mittens, trigger mitts (index finger gets its own knitted covering), wristlets and five-fingered mitts (a.k.a. gloves) for adults and kids. Each pattern has a difficulty rating: Intermediate is called “tangly,” which anyone who has ever stitched charted colorwork will intuitively understand; advanced is referred to as “over the wharf,” so you might want to insert a lifeline in your knitting here and there. The patterns introduce knitters to the beautiful motifs and long-wearing quality of classic double-knit woolen mitts, but the book is also part homage to the knitters and wearers of the original mittens—those on the sea, by the sea, or who simply want to enjoy and preserve seafaring accessory traditions.

## ▼ Seamless Knit Sweaters in 2 Weeks

**By Marie Greene**  
**Page Street Publishing; \$21.99**  
**ISBN: 978-1624147401**

Remember the ice-bucket challenge traveling around the celebrity set a few years ago? *Seamless Knit Sweaters* could be the knitters’ equivalent: More than 100 Ravelers have already taken the plunge, posting their VIPs and FOs of Greene’s



knit-in-two-weeks designs—20 top-down cardigans or pullovers with minimal, well-edited details and textures. While Greene includes a guide to choosing the correct size

to make and a warning to not skimp on gauge, the info takes on extra importance because of the book’s quick-stitch premise. This means swatching is done to determine not only stitch and row count for garment size, but minutes and seconds, too, for an estimate of the time it will take to finish. Greene has coined this Goal Knitting, and she organized the patterns in time-stamped chapters—there are long-weekend knits, binge knits, staycation knits and travel-friendly vacation knits. Note that the time challenge is a light-hearted one, meant to help knitters avoid long-on-the-needles projects and instead produce ones that make it to the finish line.

## ▼ Knitted Safari

**By Sara Keen**  
**GMC Publications; \$19.95**  
**ISBN: 978-1784944018**

The fact that the animals herein are knitted makes it a bit of a rarity among books of this type. The patterns include the Big Five of safaris—



lion, tiger, elephant, giraffe and hippo—along with a whimsical meerkat, two-toed sloth and bright pink flamingo. Stitch up the cute 4x4 SUV pattern and playmat too to create a complete kids’ play set. Each of the 25 patterns is written row by row, with further instructions for finishing. Each animal is all yarn—no plastic eyes or noses are applied. The techniques glossary explains basic increasing and decreasing, seaming and changing colors, so even beginners can cast on with confidence.

## ▼ A Textile Traveler’s Guide to Peru and Bolivia

**By Cynthia LeCount Samaké**  
**Thrums Books; \$24.95**  
**ISBN: 978-1732352858**

If a trip to South America is on your bucket list, this book can give your travels a fun fiber focus. The author, founder of Behind the Scenes Adventures, shares her off-the-beaten-path sources for textiles, yarns and fiber, stretching from Machu Picchu

to Lima, Copacabana to La Paz and more, each a city-by-city tour through



local markets, festivals and museums. Once you find that must-have knitted hat or woven place mat set, you’ll be glad to have Samaké’s market and technical insights on how to strike a deal with the artisan-seller and how to distinguish natural dyes from chemical ones or made-by-hand versus factory made. There is also a directory of shops, hotels and restaurants, and important safety tips, particularly for travelers going it alone.

## ▼ Socks from Around Norway

**By Nina Granlund Sæther**  
**Trafalgar Square Books; \$26.95**  
**ISBN: 978-1570769221**

Sæther’s follow-up to her acclaimed *Mittens From Around Norway* features 40 traditional sock patterns inspired by treasures from museums and private Norwegian folk-art collections. Accompanying each of the author’s updated designs is not only its regional origin but rich stories of the fibers that were used, the culture of knitting and how the style evolved. All of the patterns are worked cuff



down, and the majority feature a gusset heel, though a few have hour-glass, band, afterthought, etc., which are included in the techniques section. Just two skill ratings—intermediate or experienced—are indicated, but first-time sock knitters could likely cast on one of the ribbed anklet patterns on their way to, say, the more elaborate five-color knee socks. Most of Sæther’s samples were knitted with yarns that may be hard to find in the United States, but she provides CYC specs to make substitution easier.

## ▼ Colourwork Knits

**By Dee Hardwicke**  
**Quail Studio; £12.99**  
**ISBN: 978-0993590849**



In her debut knitwear design collection, Hardwicke just might have you at “hydrangea,” one of her 12 nature-inspired sweaters, scarves and hats



(plus a skirt, too). Cherry blossoms, butterflies and oak leaves are among the other motifs, most of which are worked in

intarsia, with a few incorporating stranded colorwork. There is a brief explanation of both techniques, but beginners may want to stitch up a few trial swatches before casting on a bigger project. There is no glossary, so familiarity with basic construction, color charts and stitch how-tos will be helpful.

*Editor's note: This book, retitled Knits From Nature, will be released by Stackpole Books in December.*

### ▼ Coffeehouse Knits

By Kerry Bogert

Interweave/F+W; \$26.99

ISBN: 978-1632506597

It's like an idyllic vision of your average



local knit night: a bunch of designers (Amy Gunderson, Andrea Rangel and 18 others) all gathered together, each

working on a WIP in coffee shades of chai, chocolate and chestnut. Most of the book's 20 patterns are worked in stockinette with spot texture or detail—a cabled shoulder, a traveling twist-stitch yoke. While there are no coded skill ratings, the pattern intros delineate the construction and stitching requirements, right down to whether there is constant counting involved. Interspersed among the designs are essays celebrating the community of the craft. The sit back, sip and stitch theme continues with whimsical faux coffee splatters appearing as an art element on some of the pages—perhaps a subtle reminder to move your mug just a little farther from your project bag?

### ▼ Textiles, Community and Controversy: The Knitting Map

Edited by Jools Gilson and Nicola Moffat

Bloomsbury Visual Arts; \$26.95  
ISBN: 978-1350027527

A giant piece of knitting—think blanket for a tennis court—the Knitting Map was constructed by more than 2,500 women over the course of a year. What began as a project to explore the process of making and to act as a flagship commission for Cork, Ireland's



tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2005 became, as a finished product, the source of considerable controversy upon its public debut. The 13 essays in this book examine the cultural, political and social impact of the Knitting Map as a symbol of contemporary textile art, performance and community. No patterns or how-tos here, but fans of knitting and textile history will enjoy this cerebral take on the craft.

### ▼ Designer Knit Home: 24 Room-by-Room Coordinated Knits

by Erin Black

Stackpole Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-0811719711

Pop quiz: What do big needles, easily memorized stitch patterns and chunky yarns add up to? When it comes to decorating, those three elements are all you need to knit home accessories that'll be off the needles and in use long before you decide it's time to re-do your décor. The author, trained



as an interior designer, created 24 patterns for blankets, cushion and pillow covers, baskets and plant hangers, in palettes and styles that tie together all the rooms in your house. With 20 pages of how-to information for the stitches and techniques used, the patterns are appropriate for all skill levels.

### ▼ Carefree Crochet

By May Britt Bjella Zamori

Trafalgar Square Books; \$24.95

ISBN: 978-1570768880

Ready to start a new project? Featuring 50 wide-ranging patterns, this is the book you'll turn to again and again. The designs include cardigans,



vests, wraps, ponchos and pillow covers, hats and wrist warmers, some with ethereal lacy openwork, others with a

smooth, tighter stitch that resembles knitting. Zamori herself started knitting at age 5 and discovered crochet a few years later, and her Pink Cardigan is a hybrid—the body worked in front post double crochet; the sleeves knitted in k2, p2 ribbing. Most of the projects are rated Intermediate and Advanced and are best suited for those with a working knowledge of charts and terms. There is no stitch glossary, so new crocheters should have another reference handy to tackle treble crochets, double

crochet clusters and the myriad stitches beyond single crochet.

### ▼ Winter Knits From Scandinavia

By Jenny Alderbrandt

Trafalgar Square Books; \$22.95

ISBN: 978-1570769108

Right up front, Alderbrandt allows that her in-the-round stranded colorwork patterns might pose a bit of a challenge to beginners, but the motifs are more than appealing enough to coax a cast-on. There are 26 designs—mostly two-color, sometimes three; mostly mitts, but a few hats and socks, too. Two of the most eye-catching



are the Foxy mittens and Missy C cat mittens, which have half the face on the left mitt, half on the right: Put your

hands together palms-down to show off the sophisticated animal portrait. (The palms of each mitt are adorned as well.) Traditional Scandinavian tulips, snowflakes and a few holiday themes round out the collection.

## ■ TREND WATCH

Here's what was selling the first week of May 2019:

### Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

- *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book (revised edition)*, by the editors of *Vogue Knitting* (Sixth&Spring Books)
- *Knitted Animal Friends*, by Louise Crowther (SewandSo)
- *Amy Herzog's Ultimate Sweater Book* (Abrams)
- *Japanese Knitting Stitch Bible*, by Hitomi Shida (Tuttle Publishing)
- *Yarn Substitution Made Easy*, by Carol J. Sulcoski (Lark Crafts)
- *100 Knits: Interweave's Ultimate Pattern Collection* (Interweave/F+W)
- *Seamless Knit Sweaters in 2 Weeks*, by Marie Greene (Page Street)

### Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

- *Complete Crochet Course*, by Shannon Mullett-Bowlsby (Lark)
- *Whimsical Stitches*, by Lauren Espy (Modern Makers)
- *A to Z Crochet* (Martingale)
- *Edward's Menagerie*, by Kerry Lord (F+W Media)

### Barnes & Noble Knitting List (print publications)

- *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book* (Sixth&Spring Books)
- *The Knitter's Dictionary*, by Kate Atherley (Interweave/F+W)
- *You Can Knit That*, by Amy Herzog (Abrams)



# WARM FUZZIES

Downy and soft, these irresistible yarns bring on the halo.

By Renee Lorian



**Universal Yarn/Rozetti Alaska** (above)

**Specs:** 8 colors; 44% acrylic, 26% polyamide, 15% alpaca, 15% superwash fine merino; 246yds/50g

**Gauge:** 20 sts = 4" on U.S. 5 needles

**Distinctions:** Alpaca and wool fibers surround an acrylic core in this super-light DK-weight yarn, making it a great choice for plush accessories.

**Projects:** The Choux cowl from Universal Yarn uses two shades of Alaska to create a woven-looking plaid pattern.



**Berroco Aero** (above)

**Specs:** 8 colors; 65% baby alpaca, 28% nylon, 7% wool; 164yds/50g

**Gauge:** 12 sts = 4" on U.S. 13 needles

**Distinctions:** It's hard to believe a bulky-gauge yarn can be this lightweight, but the lofty Aero practically floats.

**Projects:** The color progressions make for fun accessory knitting, or wrap up in a simple cardigan like Piave from Berroco.

**Rowan Brushed Fleece** (right)

**Specs:** 18 colors; 65% wool, 30% alpaca, 5% polyamide; 115m/50g

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

**Distinctions:** This blend spins wool and alpaca together into a downy single strand that is lovely in both textured patterns and simple stockinette.

**Projects:** The gently heathered shades are perfect for wardrobe staples and refined accessories, like the Two Point Cowl from Churchmouse Yarns and Teas.







**Lorna's Laces Angel** (above)

**Specs:** dozens of nearly solid and multi colors; 70% angora, 30% lamb's wool; 50yds/14g

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

**Distinctions:** This light-worsted angora-and-wool blend comes in a delightful mini skein, making it a great way to explore Lorna's Laces' many color options.

**Projects:** The small skeins are ideal for embellishments and edgings.



**Navia/Kelbourne Woolens Alpakka** (right)

**Specs:** 13 colors; 100% alpaca; 251yds/25g

**Gauge:** 15 sts = 4" on U.S. 10–11 needles

**Distinctions:** From the Faroe Islands–based Navia, this fine alpaca yarn creates an ethereal fabric when worked on larger needles.

**Projects:** Try pairing a natural shade with a bright color in a simple striped shawl.

**Blue Sky Fibers Techno** (below)

**Specs:** 12 colors; 68% baby alpaca, 22% silk, 10% extra-fine merino; 120yds/50g

**Gauge:** 12–20 sts = 4" on U.S. 10.5 needles

**Distinctions:** Feathery-light baby alpaca is blown into a silk mesh tube to create this caged yarn, a perfect balance of strength and fluff. The bulky weight makes it a leading candidate for accessories and gift stitching.

**Projects:** Check out the Tamarack Blanket Scarf from Blue Sky's Traveler Series. It's a blanket you can wear as a scarf, or a scarf you can use as a blanket. Either way, yes please.





# WARM FUZZIES



## Zitron/Skacel Collection Extra Klasse

(top left)

**Specs:** 9 solid colors, 4 multi colors; 100% kid mohair; 246yds/25g

**Distinctions:** A rare lace-weight that is 100% mohair, this fine yarn can be worked on a range of needle sizes.

**Projects:** Crochet up a luxurious lace shawl, or carry Extra Klasse along with a non-textured yarn to create a unique custom fabric.

## Jade Sapphire Oooh (bottom left)

**Specs:** 10 colors; 100% cashmere; 38yds/50g

**Gauge:** 6–8 sts = 4" on U.S. 11–17 needles

**Distinctions:** This fluffy ball of pure luxury is the ultimate knitter's treat. The label says cashmere, but it feels like it's spun straight from beautifully dyed clouds.

**Projects:** Indulge in something worn close to the skin, like the Neckstasy Cowl from Jade Sapphire.

## Plymouth Yarn Aireado (right)

**Specs:** 10 colors; 70% baby alpaca, 23% nylon, 7% merino wool; 283yds/100g

**Gauge:** 14 sts = 4" on U.S. 9 needles

**Distinctions:** If you are looking for a chunky gauge without the weight, look no further than this frothy yarn.

**Projects:** The generous yardage in each skein makes this yarn both garment and wallet friendly.



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Melanie Berg

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## New Initiatives Net New Sales

**T**he Winter 2018/19 market in Portland was our second show in the mixed hotel venue. Most of our exhibitors chose to show in the suites, and retailers tell us they enjoy this setup, describing it as a more personal shopping experience. In 2020, we will return to the Embassy Suites, this time in Austin, Texas.

Have you logged on to the new TNNA and Yarn Group website lately? It's new, it's better, it's growing. You may have noticed even more changes. We've added Communities and a Resource Hub just for members. Communities are forums where you can share interesting topics, ask your peers for advice and get support from fellow members. This is a private space where industry professionals like you can gather to talk shop. Currently there is just one main community, but as needs grow, more groups might branch off out of the core. The Resource Hub is a growing collection of industry knowledge. It includes information about topics ranging from social media to

shipping to sample contracts. If you're looking for information you can't find there, let us know, or if you know of a great resource that we should list, please contact us about it. The hub is built by members for members. It is a place to share helpful information that will benefit the various businesses in our industry. Together we grow—this is our TNNA.

April brought us the second annual Local Yarn Store Day. This year we launched a new Facebook group just for retailers, a merchandise store and a new tool kit to help participants get the word out about their events and offerings. The Facebook group is not just for Local Yarn Store Day, but a place for TNNA retailers to come together to chat about their shops, to ask questions, and to celebrate the local yarn store all year long. The merchandise shop allowed stores to buy Local Yarn Store Day branded swag to resell to customers or just to have for special events. And the tool kit was helpful in providing all participants with pre-crafted posts, graphics and tools to help

promote events and create social media content. Stores continue to tell us that this is a huge sales day, even bigger than black Friday, and perhaps their best sales day of the year. If you missed it, don't worry: We are already planning for next year. Save the date and start planning now: April 25, 2020.

This summer, TNNA returns to the city that rocks for the wholesale trade show market, June 19–23. Exhibitors, designers, retailers and industry professionals will come together in Cleveland to buy and sell, to showcase and discover the latest fall and winter trends, to meet and network, and to learn new skills. This year we are excited to offer a fresh array of classes, including a new lineup of business-focused offerings. These classes are meant to help both retailers and exhibitors take their businesses to the next level and to help them navigate events affecting the yarn industry. These classes join our excellent technique-based classes for a rockin' educational experience in Cleveland.

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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## Get Your Creative Juices Flowing

In the arts and crafts industry, one of the perpetual challenges is staying inspired. Maintaining a business puts demands on your time and energy, but it's important to step away, learn from others and replenish your creative juices. Attending a trade show, conference or industry event is among the best ways to do this.

Trade shows offer a multitude of ways to get inspired, from chatting with like-minded people to being among the first to see next year's top trends. But it's the rich educational sessions that may provide the biggest bang for your buck. Why does conference education make solid business and creative sense? Here are three top reasons.

**1)** It keeps you inspired through learning. It's challenging to carve out time to learn a new skill. Trade shows afford you an opportunity to take expert-led deep dives. And while show days may be jam-packed, you may find that you're refreshed and reinvigorated when you return to your business following the event.

**2)** You can connect with the best and brightest industry minds. Trade show speakers come from a variety of backgrounds: Some are industry experts, others are professional speakers and educators, and many are your peers. Educational sessions give you the opportunity to ask the speakers questions; some even share content with attendees after the presentation, so you can refer back to what you learned when you return home.

**3)** You never know what you will learn. Conferences bring together all types of industry professionals, both newbies and veterans. You can learn things from all of them. During an educational session, a speaker may share a seemingly small nugget of information that transforms your idea of building a team. Or a fellow audience member may ask a question that gets you wondering about your social media strategy. It's easy to get stuck in a rut when you manage a business, even if that business is creatively driven. Hearing fresh ideas can help you take an objective look at how you're managing your business.

If you're looking to channel your enthusiasm, sharpen your business skills and expand your knowledge of the creative arts and crafting industries, look to take advantage of the rich education offered at trade shows like Creativation, the Association for Creative Industries' annual conference and trade show. It is the perfect opportunity to explore an exciting schedule of more than 100 educational events, networking and industry insights. Creativation 2020 will take place in Phoenix, Arizona, from January 16–20. Whether you're attending the event for the first time or are an industry veteran, you'll leave with a fresh tank of inspiration to fuel your business. And if you are looking for a chance to showcase your products or business best practices to an audience of business owners, buyers and influencers in the creative industry, apply to conduct a workshop or business seminar. The deadline to apply is June 10. More information can be found at [www.creativationshow.org/education/call-for-submissions](http://www.creativationshow.org/education/call-for-submissions).

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





## Stitch Away Stress

**A**pril is National Stress Awareness Month, and each year the Craft Yarn Council shares ways for needleworkers to Stitch Away Stress through crochet or knitting. In years past, the focus of the campaign was knitted and crocheted lemon-shaped “balls” designed by Twinkie Chan, which are meant to be squeezed when times get tough. Last year, Chan designed a lemon-shaped pillow, a larger alternative to the stress ball.

This year’s theme was all about self-care and its intersection with yarn crafts. During the months of February and March, CYC promoted an online survey to find out how yarn crafters and non-fiber artists alike incorporate self-care into their lives. Survey questions included “How often do you engage in self-care activities?” and “Do knitting, crochet or other fiber crafts help you to slow down?”

The survey garnered 2,898 responses. Ninety-seven percent of respondents agreed that self-care is important. Fifty-eight percent

said they engage in self-care activities daily; 47 percent said they wish they could take more time to slow down and take better care of themselves. Knitting and crochet were the top self-care activities respondents participate in, coming in at 94 percent.

Retailers can involve themselves in the campaign year-round in a variety of ways.

- Utilize CYC assets throughout the year: Share posts from CYC’s Instagram, Facebook and blog. Use #stitchawaystress in all your posts. Email [info@craftyarncouncil.com](mailto:info@craftyarncouncil.com) for photographs, graphics, blog post samples and press releases.
- Highlight soothing or soft yarns in your shop that promote self-care and stress relief.
- Provide coupons or host sales on soft or soothing yarns. Encourage customers to post projects made with these yarns on social media using the hashtag #stitchawaystress.
- Host workshops about different topics/ techniques related to self-care and stress relief: helpful stretches to do before, during and after

you knit or crochet; creating your own yarn crafting wellness plan; how to concentrate on your breath while knitting/crocheting; a small, easy project that can be picked up whenever you’re feeling overwhelmed or just need something to work on for a short while (ideas include stitching granny squares or sections for Warm Up America!).

- Promote and release a pattern for a soothing project using soft yarns sold in your shop, and host a class on how to make that project.
- Create and share your own videos related to the campaign.
- Take and share street/studio photography related to the campaign.
- Include pictures/information related to the campaign in email newsletters.

Throughout the month of April, the Craft Yarn Council shared tips on how to incorporate self-care into your life, meditative stitches to practice, soft yarns to soothe your nerves and so much more. Learn more at [www.stitchawaystress.com](http://www.stitchawaystress.com).

The Craft Yarn Council was formed in 1981 to raise awareness about fibers. Visit [craftyarncouncil.com](http://craftyarncouncil.com) or [knitandcrochet.com](http://knitandcrochet.com) for more information.



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# SPINNING & WEAVING GROUP

BY ANGELA SMITH, GROUP CHAIRPERSON AND BOARD REPRESENTATIVE



## Spinzilla and More

The Spinning & Weaving Group has seen a lot of activity over the past year. We hosted another great Spinzilla, the second one run by TNNA. The revenue from registration fees was added to the existing TNNA Foundation funds from previous Spinzilla events.

TNNA Foundation's mission is to foster curiosity, creativity and a feeling of achievement through the teaching of needlearts, and it does this by funding spinning and weaving kits, provided at no cost to groups and organizations that seek to serve the foundation's mission. The spinning and weaving kits allow children to learn the basics of our crafts, and many of the materials are reusable.

The foundation offered suppliers in the TNNA spinning and weaving community an opportunity to submit proposals to help source the materials included in these kits. The foundation reviewed the proposals and offered non-binding purchase orders to the selected

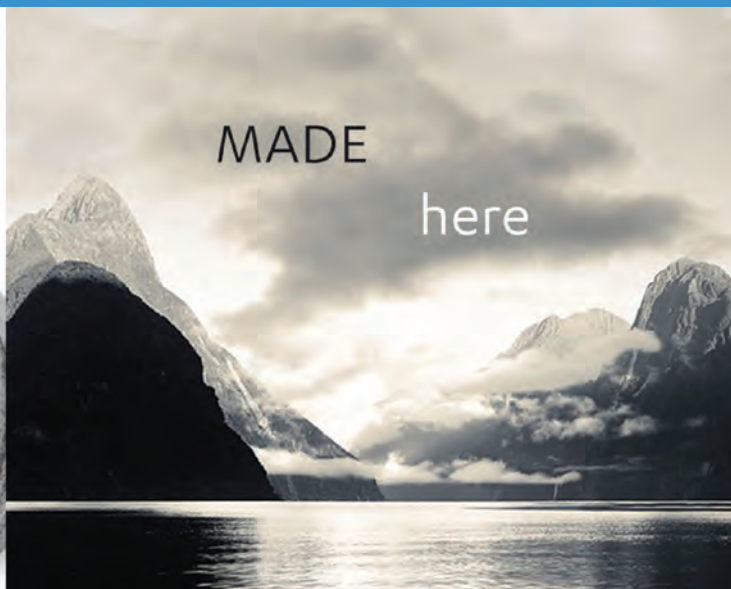
suppliers. The suppliers not only provided materials to create the kits; they also handled shipping the kits to the programs and groups that were approved by the TNNA vetting process. Kits contained spindles, roving, instruction booklets, palm-sized weaving looms, plastic tapestry needles, mini weaving combs, pick-up sticks and wooden tapestry needles. Donors included Trendsetter Yarns, Skacel, Kreinik, Colonial Needle and Interweave. The kit costs for items not donated, along with the postage costs, were covered entirely by the TNNA Foundation.

After a few slow years during which no kits were distributed, requests have finally begun to pour in: 389 spinning kits and 639 weaving kits were donated by the TNNA Foundation last year. Being able to finally get the program up and running felt really good. It took a tremendous amount of volunteer coordination and patience, but a game plan for the future now exists.

We are excited for Spinzilla 2019, which will take place October 7–13. Team registration is open from August 5–30; spinner registration is open from September 3–27. We hope spinners will sign up so we can continue to reinforce the joy of learning.

The Spinzilla team is already hard at work planning Spinzilla 2019. The goal is to make registration easier and to create a variety of sponsorship opportunities that will add value and generate excitement for sponsors and participants alike. Sasha Parks of DM Fibers and I, along with TNNA staff, will be at the TNNA Summer Trade Show in Cleveland from June 19–23 to answer any questions. The newly redesigned TNNA website will also have updates. We look forward to a better-than-ever Spinzilla this year to support continued spinning and weaving education and the expansion to other needlearts-education opportunities. Please consider supporting Spinzilla by being a participant or a sponsor.

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



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## A New Kind of Trade Organization

Is there anything better than that moment when a trade-show floor opens? All the months of preparation each business has made to design and source new products, merchandise displays and create engaging marketing materials finally sees the light of day. Buyers and industry professionals flood in, and the booths are humming. The face-to-face interaction at the show is invaluable for forging relationships and learning about the latest industry developments. But what happens after the show closes?

Filling that gap is the mission of Craft Industry Alliance, a new kind of trade association for the crafts industry. Every single day, CIA provides shop owners and industry professionals with news and analysis, training and networking opportunities that ensure you're staying on top of what's most important in the yarn industry and the crafts industry as a whole.

Founded in 2015, Craft Industry Alliance now has 1,200 members, including solo entrepreneurs and businesses of all sizes. We are makers,

designers, retailers, educators, suppliers and content creators. Our members come from all areas of craft, including knitting, crochet, weaving, cross stitch, needlepoint, sewing and more. We've found that craft-industry professionals share a lot in common: We all have a vested interest in learning about accounting, branding, marketing and advertising, demographics and trends, legal issues, manufacturing, publishing, contracts and more.

Every other week we publish a digital journal with timely articles, plus a downloadable resource you can put to use in your business right away. A few examples of the resources in our library include a mobile payment processor cost comparison, a return and exchange policy you can edit and use, and SEO tips and tricks to optimize your website for search. We also hold monthly webinars that are free for members (and are recorded so you can watch them at your convenience) taught by industry experts. Recent webinar topics include financial planning for craft entre-

preneurs, crowdfunding, preparing to exhibit at a trade show, and how to nurture and grow a Facebook group for your business.

CIA members are invited to meet virtually twice a month in our Coffee Klatsch, a networking event that facilitates collaboration. We also have secure online forums and a private Facebook group for frank discussion and ongoing support. Weaver Liz Gipson, a member since our launch, says, "Craft Industry Alliance provides invaluable resources for anyone in a craft-related business. Its founders draw on best practices from the wider world of business concerns. It is particularly useful for the solopreneur and those who are interested in connecting with this innovative class of businesses, designers and industry leaders." If you hunger for the excitement of the trade show floor all year long, the Craft Industry Alliance community is for you. Visit us at [craftindustryalliance.org](http://craftindustryalliance.org). Membership is affordable. Have a question? Email us at [hello@craftindustryalliance.org](mailto:hello@craftindustryalliance.org). We're happy to help.

The Craft Industry Alliance is a community of craft industry makers, suppliers, designers, content creators, educators and service providers. It aims to be a trusted source of industry information, creative inspiration and community for craft professionals.



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## Introducing Our New Product Designer

This year, our small Ravelry team has grown by one: We have a new Product Designer, Livia Nelson. Livia, a Raveler from New York City, is a knitter and aspiring crocheter, and she is now in charge of everything related to researching, planning and developing the user experience and visual design of Ravelry. We're thrilled to take the next step with her.

Digital product designers identify problems that website users (or potential users) have, then design digital prototypes that solve those problems. Livia aims to make Ravelry "as welcoming and easy to use for all knitters and crocheters as I can, regardless of age, digital literacy, ability, what country you live in, etc." As a visual designer, she also wants to make sure that Ravelry looks good and that "everything Ravelry-related that you see, whether it's a pin or a sign or an icon on someone else's website, makes you immediately think, 'That's Ravelry!'"

In her first few months, Livia has been researching how Ravelers really use the site, through in-person and virtual interviews and

by analyzing data from Ravelers who have opted-in to allowing their usage to be collected for this purpose in their Ravelry preferences. She has also been working with Casey on new features, redesigning existing sections of the site, and teaming up with Jess on some visual design elements.

"In terms of the actual work I am and will be doing, I love the breadth of what I get to work on," Livia says. "The UX half of product design is very right-brain, analytical and logical, and the visual design is more creative and left-brain, and I find it very satisfying. On any given day I might Skype an LYS employee who teaches Ravelry classes in the shop, do UX research, mock up screens for a new feature, research color schemes and typography, review Raveler behavior, or work on a survey. I feel so lucky that I love doing every one of these things."

The first user interviews Livia conducted were with local yarn stores in her area, and she looks forward to making sure that Ravelry is even more helpful to yarn shops. "Local yarn stores are such magical places, and I could go

on and on about their hidden strengths. But something I thought about a lot more, after visiting several shops in New York City, is that a yarn store is that rare space in this day and age where you can go in, sit down for several hours, and feel welcomed and relaxed.

"My impression is that right now yarn shops are doing a lot of the on-the-ground work of teaching new people how to use Ravelry, which we love and appreciate. But I also understand that this can sometimes be time-consuming for LYS owners and employees, so I'd love to make 'learning Ravelry' a little bit more self-service, so that shops can focus more on selling yarn or selling patterns through Ravelry in-store sales," she says.

If you'd like to help Livia make Ravelry even more approachable, useable and fun for you, we have a new Suggestion Box thread pinned to the top of the For the Love of Ravelry forum where you can drop suggestions. You can also go to [ravelry.com/preferences](https://ravelry.com/preferences) and sign up to allow her to see how you use Ravelry. The more people who can participate, the better.

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



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# Stolen Goods?

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Myth-free information about using copyright to protect your yarny handiwork.

**Y**ou're flipping through a magazine or surfing online when suddenly you see it. It's your pattern—with someone else credited as the designer. "They can't do that," you think. "It's protected by copyright." But is it? You may be surprised to learn the limited role of copyright when it comes to protecting knitted and crocheted designs.

## Copyright & Clothing

In the U.S., copyright law protects an original creation (called a "work") that is in a tangible and fixed form. The classic "work" is a book, but copyright also protects other kinds of creative expression, including songs, photographs, movies, even computer software. You might think that a knitted garment is as much of an expression as a photograph or song. The Copyright Office, however, disagrees. Because clothing items perform a useful purpose—covering and protecting the body—they fall within an exception to copyright protection.

In general, copyright law is designed to protect creative expression without overly burdening industry and innovation. The "useful articles" doctrine helps strike that balance. If the design of a functional or utilitarian item were protected by copyright, many tools and other useful products would no longer be freely available. Imagine if the design of, say, a shovel were protected by copyright. This extremely useful item would not be cheap and ubiquitous; instead, the copyright owner would have a monopoly on this everyday object. To avoid this, copyright protects only artistic or expressive works.

The test for determining whether a design or design element is copyright protected focuses on whether the decorative element can be separated from the design without making it non-functional and, if so, whether the decorative element would otherwise qualify for copyright protection. Think of a fork. Its general design—a handle with a flat portion ending in prongs—can't be copyrighted because of its useful nature, but a decorative floral panel on the handle may be. The test is whether the decorative aspect could exist independently. Assuming the floral panel is an original work, then the panel itself, but not the whole fork, is protected.

Unfortunately for the fashion industry, clothing has traditionally been considered a "useful article" and thus is entitled to only narrow protection for its decorative or expressive elements. A solid-colored drop-shoulder sweater knit entirely in stockinette stitch wouldn't meet this standard; it contains no

decorative pattern or other creative features that can be separated from the sweater itself. Add an original intarsia design to the front of the same sweater, though, and you may well have some copyright protection. You can conceptually separate the front motif from the sweater itself: Imagine that same design painted on a canvas or screened onto a tote bag. Copyright protection likely would apply—but only to the intarsia motif.

As you might expect, there's much uncertainty about where the line falls between utilitarian fea-

What does this mean for most knitting and crochet designers? U.S. copyright law does not protect most clothing designs. Copyright only protects decorative or artistic motifs that can be separated from the knitted or crocheted item. Only the motif is protected, however, and not the entire garment. Most cases alleging copyright infringement of a garment design are unsuccessful because copyright protection is so minimal. The "10 percent" rule—that if you change at least 10 percent of the design, you

## Beyond the Design

**Even if your design isn't protected by copyright, you may still have a copyright claim. While the design of your sweater or hat may not be copyrightable, the written-out pattern may be. If the alleged thief copied the text of your written pattern verbatim, you have a much stronger claim of copyright infringement. Similarly, if the thief uses your original photographs or sketches to sell the pattern, you likely have a protectible copyright claim. It's also important to note that copyright protects the unauthorized distribution of your copyrighted work. If you create a copyright-protected printed or PDF pattern, you have the right to decide who distributes it, whether for free or for a price. There's a persistent copyright myth that it isn't a copyright violation if you don't charge for someone else's work, but that is simply not true.**

**If you've determined you have a protectible copyright interest that is being infringed, you'll need to take action to protect your rights. You can start by contacting the infringer and asking him or her to remove the pattern from his or her website, to stop using copyrighted material like your original photographs, and/or to stop selling or giving your work away (depending on the nature of the protection). If that doesn't work, you'll need to decide whether and how much to escalate. Possible next step: sending the infringer a formal cease-and-desist letter. A qualified attorney can draft one for you or you can draft one yourself, formally asserting your ownership of the pattern, its protection by copyright, and a request to remove the content and to stop infringing. You can find templates online. If the infringement occurs on the internet, send a take-down notice, a request to an internet service provider, a website host, a company hosting the URL and/or search engines to remove the infringing content or risk liability for damages. An attorney can draft these for you or you can find templates online. Make sure you find out the current requirements for a valid take-down notice and follow them to the letter.**

**If the copyright infringement is ongoing, you may be forced to take legal action. Contact an attorney licensed in your jurisdiction, preferably one with experience in the very specialized area of copyright law, to discuss your unique case. An attorney can advise you about the strength of your claim, the costs associated with pursuing it and the likelihood of success.**

tures and decorative elements. And because the process of knitting and crochet creates the stitches that form the actual fabric of a garment, these techniques have an inherently functional purpose. (In other words, no, you can't copyright garter stitch.) Techniques (say, a new way to bind off stitches) are a process rather than a separable decorative element, no matter how elegantly they are executed, and again cannot be separated from the garment without it falling apart.

aren't committing a copyright violation—is a myth. As a result in the United States, garment knock-offs are generally permissible, absent trademark infringement or separable decorative elements as described above.

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Carol J. Sulcoski, a Philadelphia-based attorney, is also a knitting author, teacher, dyer and designer. This article is solely the opinion of the author and not her employer.



# Top Down or Bottom Up

Turn your customers into sweater makers for maximum profit.

BY KRISTI JOHNSON

Does your shop have a strategy for capturing the hearts of sweater knitters and crocheters? Are you nurturing beginners through skill-building classes and workshops? Are you tantalizing your more experienced sweater makers with inspiring educational workshops taught by top designers? Perhaps you have a static base of customers who are already creating sweaters, but not a lot of eager beginners who are flocking to your shop to buy sweater quantities of yarn. If that's the case, now is the time to put a plan in place.

Spring is an excellent time to get customers excited about sweater knitting and crocheting. While stitching sweaters in July and August might not be enticing to many of your customers, working on a sweater then will mean a finished garment to show off once the mercury starts to drop. It's never too early to start getting the creative juices flowing. Posting registration for a new class or workshop, or informing your customers about a crochet- or knit-along schedule, is a prelude to actually getting yarn into your customers' hands. Build the base of excitement by setting a timeline for skill building and classes/workshops that customers can follow and understand. Don't wait until September to start getting people thinking about sweaters.

## Sweaters Bring People Together—and Keep Them Coming Back

There isn't a better way to build excitement and buzz in your shop than hosting in-store events such as knit-alongs, workshops, stitch nights and classes. A "My First Sweater" series of classes is a great way to help customers take the plunge. You'll probably even find that many of your customers will want to sign up for the next class, and then the one after that. The synergy created by a consistent class and event schedule gives customers the reassurance that they will be supported throughout the entire sweater-building process and assures them that your shop is committed to helping them create a successful and beautiful garment that they'll be proud of.

This, in turn, will keep customers coming back. We all know how hard it is to attract and retain new clients. Your customers will buy many sweater quantities of yarn throughout their life-

time if they feel you have their back and that they will find a supportive community at your store. However, you should always aim for clarity in class descriptions and communications to manage expectations. Set limits on what kind of help your shop will provide outside of classes (if applicable). For instance, if a customer asks for help with a problem and you can stand behind the counter and give instruction without taking away from other customers, great. But if the problem is one that will take more time to explain, perhaps a private lesson is called for.

Always celebrate your customers' efforts. A gallery of pictures posted regularly online can keep your students engaged while inspiring others to sign up for a class (or two). Host an open house and hold a fashion show to allow customers to show off their successes. Before you know it, you will have more than a handful of accomplished sweater knitters and crocheters who may be more than happy to make samples for the store or let you show off their garments in your shop.

## Improved Skills Lead to Increased Sales

Developing your customers' sweater-stitching skills and confidence will give them the expertise to tackle more difficult projects down the road. Invite a talented knitwear designer to give an exclusive workshop to continue building on your customers' sweater excitement. Host short technique workshops that are a precursor to the creation of full garments, such as cables, colorwork, understanding gauge and fit, etc. All of these mini classes can be designed to help customers utilize these skills in a sweater workshop or class at a later date.

Examine the types of sweater classes you are hosting to make sure you are meeting all of your customers' needs, from yarn selection to finishing. A successful garment outcome will assure you a repeat sweater maker. Hold a series of sweater classes throughout the year, ones that will challenge both new and more experienced needleworkers. Different construction techniques, colorwork techniques and finishing options will continue to inspire and excite your customers. Consider hosting a crochet-only sweater class to foster community among your crocheting customers.

## Inspire Confidence

Stocking sweater quantities of yarn can be challenging for an LYS. Having enough options for your customers to choose from can amount to a sizable financial investment. For stitch-alongs and sweater workshops, consider selecting one supplier and ask to purchase or borrow a color card or mini color ring. Have class members select their yarn quantity and colors in advance with a prepayment. Most yarn companies, and many larger hand dyers as well, are able to accommodate a quick turnaround on custom orders. At the beginning of the season, highlight specific brands you are able to stock in sweater quantities and hold trunk shows with garments in these bases. These are great ways to build brand loyalty and keep customers from hopping online to find the product.

While fashion trends—felted, fluffy scarves, socks, huge lace shawls, brioche—come and go, sweater knitting never goes out of style. A strategic plan for building your sweater knitter/crocheter base can create economic security for your shop. "I wish I could knit a sweater" and "I made a sweater once, but it was a disaster" were phrases I heard on a regular basis when I was a shop owner. Being able to confidently assure your customers that they too can create a sweater they will be proud to wear is a great feeling. Being known for the beautiful sweaters you show in your shop can even raise the profile of your shop.

## Consider the Numbers

**Ravelry is home to more than 100,000 knitted sweater patterns and almost 50,000 knitted shawl patterns. With the growing popularity behind the maker movement and sewn garment construction, it's clear that sweater knitting is continuing to be the main force for the yarn industry.**

As a former yarn shop owner and an avid sweater knitter, Kristi Johnson made it her personal mission to help knitters fulfill their dreams of knitting sweaters during her seven years at the store. She's been the owner of Shalimar Yarns, which produces hand-dyed luxury yarns, for the past eleven years.



# A Click Away

BY MARY MCGURN

Linking directly to products within social media could be the new way to make sales.

**Y**our opportunity to reach, target and sell to more customers online has taken a major leap. Instagram, the photo- and video-sharing mobile app that boasts one billion-plus monthly users (500 million active daily), will enable users to buy products directly from within the app before the end of 2019. Why get excited if you already have a well-performing e-commerce site? Well, 80 percent of all Instagram users follow a business to feel more closely connected. Eight of the top 15 most-followed brands on Instagram are in the business of retail. And more than 90 million users now tap on posts and videos to reveal shoppable tags, a feature that allows businesses to tag products in a photo or video with details and price and then link to an external landing page to enable a purchase. This article takes an in-depth look at shoppable tags, because they already empower businesses to convert Instagram users to customers.

## Setting It All Up

Instagram views shopping as a big part of connecting with friends and interests on the app. In late 2018, Instagram introduced shoppable tags, allowing business profiles with at minimum 10,000 followers to tag products, much like one could tag a person in a post. In 2019, Instagram expanded access to all business accounts, no matter the follower count. What steps does a business on Instagram need to take to set up shoppable tags?

**Step One.** First, you must have a business account, not a personal one. You may already have done this, given the features a business profile gives you—analytics, the ability to advertise, more contact information under your profile and post scheduling through verified third-party apps such as Sked, Sprout Social and Buffer. Haven't converted? Before you start, make sure you're an Admin or Business Manager of your Facebook page; your Instagram business profile must connect to your Facebook page. On your Instagram profile it's as easy as Options>Business Settings>Switch to Business Profile. Before you convert, check that your business category on Facebook is correct, since Instagram will display it.

**Step Two.** Check Instagram to see if your country is a supported market. Shoppable tags are currently allowed in 46 markets. The U.S. market

is supported. In fact, by country, the U.S. is the largest user of Instagram, with 121 million accounts.

**Step Three.** Update the Instagram app to its latest iOS or Android version.

**Step Four.** Be ready to sell something! Your business must sell physical goods, not services. You must also comply with Instagram's Merchant Agreement and Commerce Policies.

**Step Five.** Create a product catalog on Facebook to which you link your Instagram business profile. A Facebook catalog is basically a listing of all the products—photos with descriptions—that you want to sell via Facebook and Instagram. The easiest way to create your catalog is to do it on your Facebook page by adding a shop section. If you aren't already using Facebook's Shopping template for your page, enable it by clicking Settings>Edit Page>Template>Shopping Template>Apply Template. Once you have the right template, a Shop tab will automatically appear on your page. Click the tab and start adding products by following the prompts. You'll be able to edit or remove products later. You'll also configure your payments, whether a linked bank account or an arrangement with payment processors such as PayPal or Stripe. After your catalog is created, Facebook offers you Catalog Manager, a place to help add products, manage inventory, create ads from your inventory and connect it to Instagram.

**Step Six.** Wait to be approved by Instagram. The review process can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days after you link your business profile to the Facebook catalog. When approved, you'll see a notification on the top of your Instagram profile.

**Step Seven.** Cross the finish line. On your Instagram profile, complete the process by tapping Instagram Settings>Business Settings>Shopping. Tap Continue and select to connect to the catalog you created on Facebook. Tap done. You're reached the end of the setup process. Now, how do you put it into practice on your posts?

## Get Tagging

There's good and bad news about posts with shoppable tags. You can go back to older posts with products, tap to edit and tag them. You can also add shoppable tags to multiple products (up to five) in one post. What you can-

not do is tag other users and your own products at the same time in the same post. You cannot promote or boost shoppable tagged posts. You cannot tag products on a carousel post.

To get started, go to post a photo or video as you usually do. After you've written your caption and added geolocation, tap "Tag Products" from the share screen. Tap the product in the photo you want to tag. For videos, a tray will appear where you can select one or more products to tag. Enter the name of each product you're tagging (use the same name as in your catalog), then tap to select when they appear in the search box. With each selected product, a price tag will appear exactly where you tapped. Tap and drag on the price tag to reposition. Tap Done, and either tap Share or preview your post by tapping "Preview Tagged Products" before sharing. You can also tap to "Save Draft." Smile. You're now selling on Instagram.

## How to Use Shoppable Tags Within Instagram Stories

**Shoppable tags appear as stickers on Stories. Only one product sticker can be added per Story. You can use the sticker along with with swipe-up, highlights and videos. Here's how to add the stickers.**

1. Select the photo or video with the product or products displayed.
2. Tap the Sticker icon.
3. Choose the appropriate product from your catalog (it appears automatically).
4. Move the sticker to where you want it to appear on your story. If you wish to edit the name of your product, you'll first need to change it in the product catalog before adding the sticker. The text color of the sticker can be changed by tapping the sticker.
5. Share your Story.

Mary McGurn of McGurn Media creates, manages and strategizes social media accounts for small businesses and nonprofits.

# Open for Business

Consider your shop's hours carefully to make the most of your customers' time.

BY CLAIRE LUI

**T**he advantages of local yarn stores are many: Physical stores offer customers a place to browse, to see and feel and test-drive yarns, to meet other knitters.

However, unlike a website, which can take orders any time of the day or night, stores are open only during certain hours. For business owners, it can be tricky trying to balance your staffing costs (including your own time) while providing ample opportunity for customers to come and visit.

## Location, Location, Location

Of course, your location matters. A store on a busy urban thoroughfare will need to cater to a different set of customers' needs than a store in a rural or suburban area. Ann Miner, owner of Yarn Folk in Ellensburg, Washington, which is located in a small college town in the middle of the state, chose to be open six days a week: Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday from 12 to 4 p.m. Miner made sure to include weekday evening hours so people with 9-to-5 jobs would have a chance to stop by after work and both days on the weekend for any customers who cannot visit during the week or may be traveling through the state.

For Mary Fellman, the store manager of Close-Knit Yarn Cooperative in Los Alamos, New Mexico, the store's hours are driven primarily by two external factors: first, the fact that Los Alamos is a de facto company town, with the Los Alamos National Lab as the town's primary employer, and second, the fact that the store shares space with a quilting store.

The Yarn Cooperative—which operates like a co-op grocery store, but with yarn, and is run by a group of board members—is closed on Sundays and Mondays, but is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays; from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, with extra hours on alternating Saturdays. Unlike Yarn Folk, Fellman says that Sundays (and Mondays) are very slow retail days in their semi-rural area. But Fridays are quite variable for the store, since most of their customer base works for the National Lab, where many employees have alternate Fridays off. This means that Friday lunchtimes can end up being the busiest time

of the week, when customers want to stop in before the weekend, or, alternately, very quiet, if customers' work schedules keep them at the lab for the day.

Fellman notes that it was important to match the store hours of the quilt store, where they are co-located, though the Yarn Cooperative also offers extra hours on Thursdays and alternating Saturdays for knitting classes and meetups. "For me," said Fellman, "an important factor in altering the Thursday night schedule was learning that knitters tend to come later in the day than quilters. Seriously."

In Whitestone, Yukon, a small city in the Canadian Territories, Heather Sealey, owner of Itsy-Bitsy Yarn Store, also takes into consideration the stores that surround hers when setting store hours. Itsy-Bitsy Yarn Store is in a small mall with several other creative businesses in the center of the town's downtown area. "People here are pretty well trained on the business hours of shops in the mall," she says. Most of the mall's stores are open between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. and closed on Sunday and Monday. Itsy-Bitsy Yarn Store follows suit, with the store open 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday.

Some special occasions warrant changing store hours. In 2018, since Christmas fell on a Tuesday, Fellman opened the store on Sunday, December 23—a day the Yarn Cooperative is normally closed—for limited hours and then for the full regular hours on Monday, December 24, to accommodate any last-minute shoppers.

## Space Considerations

Does your store stay open during knitting meetups, as Close-Knit Yarn Cooperative does, or close, like Itsy-Bitsy Yarn Store, which has been hosting a Knit Night after hours on Thursdays? Itsy-Bitsy's Heather Sealey notes that because of the small size of her store, she is planning on changing the structure of her knit night; currently, she is able to host a group of only 10 or so members, preventing any new members from joining the group or other customers from shopping during this time. At Yarn Folk, Ann Miner splits the difference, hosting Social Stitching on Thursdays from 5 to 9 p.m., but with the official store hours closing at 7, so that she can leave at 7 if the weather is in-

clement or attendance is light.

Determining a store's hours may seem like one of the most basic decisions you make as a business owner, but getting it right will establish the basis for a loyal and profitable customer base. You may not get it right at first—you might find that your customers prefer to come after work, during lunch or on weekends. Ask for their feedback and notice the patterns, and you'll keep them coming back.

## Consistency Is Key

**Most customers give a store only one chance to get it right. If your store is closed when your sign and online resources say it will be open, customers will rarely return to try again. Use these tips to ensure you're always on time.**

- **Make sure all your store hours on the different electronic channels—Google Business, Yelp, Facebook and your web page—are the same.**
- **If an unexpected change is necessary, remind all your customers using all of your platforms: email, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. If possible, put a physical sign on your door that explains the unexpected closure. People will understand an illness or other emergency, but unexplained closures baffle and frustrate potential customers.**
- **Even if your store is in an area where the population fluctuates by season—a beach town or a college town, for instance—think carefully before adjusting your hours. Customers come to expect a store to be open during certain times and may become frustrated and turn to a competitor (or online) if the hours vary greatly from week to week.**
- **Whether you are your store's only employee or you have hired staff, you need to build time into your schedule for paperwork, inventory and other business and life responsibilities.**
- **Remember: It's always easier to add hours than to take away hours.**

Claire Lui writes and knits in Forest Hills, Queens.



BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

## Circle of Stitches

Salem, Massachusetts



Knitting tools and witchy supplies including crystals, tarot cards and spells: They're not what most would describe as a perfect pairing, yet in Salem, Massachusetts, it all makes perfect sense—particularly for Circle of Stitches owner Ana Campos.

**I**'ve been a tarot reader for longer than I've been a knitter, so as the concept for the shop evolved, it became a reflection of things that I am really passionate about," Campos says. "I see the common element as being about creativity, expression and self-care. At first I worried about mixing concepts, but our customers have been really supportive."

Campos opened the shop in the spring of 2015 in the Pickering Wharf neighborhood of Salem, a burgeoning residential neighborhood on the waterfront that's home to several restaurants and a diverse shopping district. "We are

next to a jewelry shop and a spice shop and across the street from a witch shop," she says.

Circle of Stitches is one of a handful of yarn retailers in the area, which come together once a year to participate in the Knit North Yarn Crawl, a showcase of yarn stores north of Boston. Upward of 10 shops participate in the annual event, hosting knitters on self-guided tours of the stores, with schedules packed with trunk shows, designer visits and sales.

Still, Campos, who was born in São Paulo, Brazil, and moved to the United States when she was 18, strives to ensure her shop has a clear identity and mission. "We work very hard to differentiate what we can offer the community, through our product offerings, our workshop offerings and our expertise," she says. "We prefer to partner with smaller companies and independent artisans rather than bigger companies, and we spend a lot of time developing workshop concepts. Our focus is on helping our customers expand their knitting skills and making sure we have the expertise to help all folks who come in with any and all knitting- or crochet-related questions."

The 840-square-foot shop's textile inventory is focused on natural fibers, many from U.S. manufacturers. "We do carry some larger brands, but our passion is working with small, family-owned businesses. We are also passionate about supporting the local yarn industry, so we look to partner with U.S.-made wool wholesalers," Campos says.

The yarn offerings are diverse, from lace to super-bulky, sock to Aran. "We've noticed that customers here on the East Coast prefer softer fibers. There's a lot of demand for merino, unlike on the West Coast, where there is more appreciation for rustic, harder wools," she says. "We've been working on educating our customers on how to and why to work with rustic wools and have seen an increase in demand. But nothing beats hand-dyed merino wools."

Campos's small team, which includes "right-hand yarnie" associate Winnie Man (pictured at right in the photo with Campos above), reg-

ularly hosts workshops in the store, covering everything from weaving to crochet to full moon meditations for creativity to private craft tutorials online. The workshop schedule is always evolving.

"I teach many of the classes myself, but I've been working toward bringing in more teachers so I can spend more time with my family," Campos says. "I have lists of techniques and projects that I want to teach folks, and I develop workshops around those. If I know a skilled teacher who could run the workshop, I reach out. Occasionally I'll meet someone whose work I find really inspiring and develop a workshop around that person."

The workshops have helped the store become a community hub. Though Campos does provide customers with the option of online shopping, most come into the shop, some even asking to use the space for private events. And she has a "drive-thru" service, in which customers can place an order online or over the phone and staff will take the order to their car







**Delight in the making**  
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window, so her clients don't have to worry about finding parking. "Parking can be tough in Salem, especially during busier times of the year," Campos says.

To further foster the store's community feel, Circle of Stitches runs a few annual initiatives, among them the Sweater Challenge. The two-and-a-half-month project involves knitters choosing a pattern of their liking and getting support regarding measuring, fit and gauge so that they can complete the garment in time for the store's anniversary party each March.

"We launched this challenge because I am very passionate about knitting as a component

of the slow fashion movement and also about empowering knitters," Campos says. "I love helping people understand sizing and customization, and I want all knitters to feel as if they can move beyond scarves and hats, if that is something they are interested in." Campos also organizes the annual Lakeside Fiber Retreat, a weekend in New Hampshire for creatives to get away from their routines and spend time learning an assortment of craft skills, everything from shibori dyeing and combination knitting to jewelry making and sewing a top.

The shop's clientele is as diverse as its offerings—"We have customers of all genders,

racers, backgrounds, sexual orientations and ages. Diversity and inclusivity are very important to us," Campos says. "We have strictly yarn customers, strictly witchy customers, and we have customers who are interested in both," she says. "Depending on the time of the year, our store will be more heavily focused on fiber arts or on the witchy aspect." And while she's still planning the shop's events calendar for summer and fall, it's certain things will get extra witchy come October. "It is a big tourism month in Salem, and those visitors are very heavily interested in metaphysics, so in early fall we refocus in preparation for that."



### Circle of Stitches

66 Wharf Street, Salem, MA 01970  
(978) 745-9276; [www.circleofstitches.com](http://www.circleofstitches.com)

**Years in business:** 4

**Staff:** 2 full-time, 2 part-time

**Square footage:** 840 square feet, plus storage space

**Hours:** Monday, closed. Tuesday, 11 a.m.–7 p.m. Wednesday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Thursday, 12–7 p.m. (Open until 9 p.m. for Sip 'n' Stitch every first and third Thursday.) Friday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Sunday, 1–5 p.m.

**QUICK  
GLANCE**



## Tahki Yarns

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

**A**s the retail landscape shifts, so too do the players. And though it began as a “crazy idea” during a conversation one evening in 2015, the acquisition of Tahki•Stacy Charles by Webs, the well-known Northampton, Massachusetts, retailer, became a reality in the spring of 2018. But beyond a strategic business decision for both parties, this is a business story about relationships.

“Steve and I met Stacy Charles and Diane Friedman [the former owners of TSC] about a year after assuming ownership of Webs from Steve’s parents,” says Webs co-owner Kathy Elkins. “I traveled to TNNA in Long Beach by myself to meet vendors. I went to the TSC booth and introduced myself to Stacy. We carried several of the TSC yarns, and I asked if he would consider visiting us and maybe doing an event.”

Charles started visiting Webs semi-annually, and he, Friedman and the Elkinses began a tradition of meeting up on Friday nights at every TNNA. In 2015, Charles and Friedman expressed concerns about the sustainability of the traditional wholesaler-to-retailer model. “They explained they did not want to

go direct on their own but felt they needed a retail partner. Ultimately, they asked if we would consider acquiring them,” Elkins says. “We all laughed that nervous laugh.”

With each subsequent meeting, however, the conversation continued, and the idea became less crazy. And then, in the fall of 2016, Friedman revealed that she would soon be retiring. Charles, however, would not be. “It was time for us to have a serious conversation,” Elkins explains. And the acquisition process began.

Having the Tahki brand in the Webs portfolio means the company now oversees two of the industry’s best-known yarns, Donegal Tweed and Cotton Classic. “Both of these yarns have been in the U.S. market for 50 years, and both were launched by Diane Friedman. The thought of having those two yarns in our portfolio was very attractive,” says Elkins.

The Elkinses see Webs’ own brand, Valley Yarns, which is primarily natural fibers, as a complement to Tahki Yarns, which Elkins describes as having a “similar ethos, but has a bit more elasticity when it comes to being fashion forward.”

While there are growing pains whenever these types of arrangements are made—navigating manufacturing and distribution systems, maintaining or realigning retail partnerships—this particular move was made easier because Charles stayed on, under the Elkinses, as brand and creative manager.

“Having your company acquired and staying on under new ownership is not easy,” Elkins says, adding that Charles has been open to changes Webs wanted to make to the brand. “Although he is now one of our team members, we all treat it as a partnership.”







"Stacy has been incredibly supportive of our vision since the acquisition but has helped to keep us grounded in the history and legacy of the TSC brands."



Some changes to Tahki Yarns have been behind the scenes, and some knitters will notice. "Diane and Stacy were always very focused on sourcing from Italy. Some of the most beautiful yarns and top-notch mills are based there," says Elkins. But Webs has strong relationships in Peru, and this is something the brand's new owners want to incorporate into yarn offerings. "Our first two collections and our upcoming FW19 collection will have new yarns that have been sourced in Peru," she explains. "That is probably one of the most noticeable and deliberate changes we have made."

Tahki's new owners also dissolved the Terra Collection—one of their first strategic moves after acquiring the brand, Elkins says. "Steve and I personally find this type of sub-branding confusing to the end consumer. So we took the approach to simplify the brand message. If a yarn or yarns have a story, they can tell it within the overall brand," she says.

In his new role, Charles remains intimately involved. He works closely with the Elkinses on product development, brand strategy and design, and he is responsible for developing retail partnerships and managing sales to those partners.

"This is a new structure for us and not one that would work with just any-

one," Elkins says. "Stacy has been incredibly supportive of our vision since the acquisition but has helped to keep us grounded in the history and legacy of the TSC brands."

He is also the face of the brand at TNNA. He attended the winter show in Portland and will be in Cleveland in June. Elkins explains that she and her husband represent and are buying as Webs at the trade show. "We are letting Stacy do what Stacy does best, and that is foster new and existing relationships and share the brand vision of Tahki Yarns," she says.

Visitors to his booths in June can expect plenty of new product. Three new products for Tahki will be introduced along with two new products for Stacy Charles Fine Yarns and one for String, Webs' luxury private-label line. "We will also be debuting 25 new garments for Tahki and 15 for Stacy Charles Fine Yarns," Elkins says.

While the past year has been busy and full of adjustments, the groundwork has been laid for an exciting future for Tahki Yarns. "We have known Stacy for more than 15 years," says Elkins, adding that she and Steve had always deeply admired the business that Friedman and Charles ran together. "It started professionally, but over the years and with more time spent together, we became friends."



**Administrative office:** 6 Industrial Pkwy., Easthampton, MA 01027

**Retail store:** 75 Service Centre Rd., Northampton, MA 01060

1-800-FOR-WEBS (367-9327); [www.yarn.com](http://www.yarn.com)

**Number of employees:** 90

**Fun fact:** Prior to a rebranding of Stacy Charles Fine Yarns and new logo in 2010, people thought the S. Charles Collezione stood for Saint Charles. Stacy would always remind customers he is hardly a saint.



# AS THE WOOL TURNS

BY CLARA PARKES

Wool has been in the news a lot over the past few months. Major clothing retailers like Adidas, Lululemon and Under Armour are clambering to get in the wool game, locking down multi-year contracts on merino to secure supply. And Allbirds, the little startup that put wool sneakers on the map, is now valued at \$1.4 billion.

At the other end of the spectrum, animal-rights groups are ramping up their campaigns against the wool industry on the grounds that wool is cruel. Across the country last fall, PETA billboards popped up depicting a naked Alicia Silverstone urging people to be kind and leave wool behind. In other outlets, ads depicted a lamb in a grassy field with the words, “We’re individuals. We’re not sweaters. Wear something vegan.” In the U.K., they went so far as to demand that the town Wool change its name to Vegan Wool. (I’ll let you guess how the locals responded to that one.)

Depending on where you look, you’ll hear wool being talked about in tones ranging from adoring to critical. These can be tricky waters to navigate if you don’t know where the truth lies. If you own a yarn store and sell wool, you’re likely to get customers asking you questions or seeking guidance.

You are in a privileged position to be able to teach your customers the realities of wool—which, in turn, can help your





customers speak intelligently and confidently about wool in their own lives—which, in turn, will bring you more educated customers. It's a win-win situation. With that in mind, I'd like to walk us through some of the biggest questions surrounding wool right now, with talking points you can use in your own conversations.

**“Are sheep killed for their wool?”**

The short answer is no. The longer answer: nooooooooooooo.

**“Is shearing really necessary? Can't we just let them keep their coats?”**

Wool is made of keratin, the same material that forms horns, claws and our very own fingernails. Just like fingernails, a sheep's wool needs to be trimmed—usually just once a year. Shearing keeps the sheep comfortable and healthy. Fail to perform this

annual task and the wool will continue growing, eventually limiting the sheep's mobility and vision, making the animal prone to overheating or losing its balance and casting on its back, where it will be unable to right itself and can eventually die.

The longer the wool growth, the greater the likelihood in summer that the bluefly will lay its eggs in the wool; the larvae will hatch and bury themselves deep in the dark, warm folds of skin and feast on the flesh. The condition is called “flystrike,” and it's one of the most crucial reasons why sheep need to be shorn.

**“I've heard that shearing is cruel and violent. Is this true?”**

Shearing is a stressful activity for sheep. There is a rise in the stress hormone cortisol. But it's important to remember that shearing represents four minutes of the sheep's year. That's far shorter than your average anxiety-inducing thunderstorm or rush-hour commute, and it helps ensure the animal's comfort,

*(continued on page 36)*





# AS THE WOOL TURNS

health and welfare for the coming year. Immediately after being relieved of their coats, most sheep are visibly more comfortable. And by the time summer rolls around, they'll be thanking you.

Dentist appointments are equally traumatic and last much longer, yet we don't stop taking our children to the dentist just because they're afraid. This, in theory, is a similar argument for shearing.

## **"But PETA says . . ."**

PETA does say the wool industry hurts animals. But PETA also kills 90 percent of the animals placed in its shelters every year—and within the first 24 hours of their arrival, no less. PETA's primary objective seems to be that of attention.

## **"Can't they come up with a better way to shear?"**

We've put a man on the moon, but we haven't been able to improve upon sheep shearing. It is one of the few highly manual processes that we have not successfully managed to automate. To this day, it is still done by hand. Which means that for every skein or sweater or pair of socks you see, all the wool fibers in them were shorn off the sheep by a person guiding a set of blades. A recent labor shortage in Australia has led Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) to invest \$10 million AU in "streamlined wool harvesting" that will include robotic shearing components.

AWI began playing around with the idea of a shearing "robot" back in the '80s, to mixed results. Now they're using 3D-printing technology to "print" real sheep—skin folds and all—on which robots can be trained to gather data. So far, the biggest obstacles are time (the fastest robot still took 15 minutes, and the sheep's legs had to be buckled into restraints to keep the animal still) and money (the cost of getting a robot out to remote sheds in Australia could be ridiculously prohibitive).

## **"I've heard that I should avoid all wool from Australia because of 'mulesing.' Is this true, and what is that anyway?"**

Mulesing is a process that was developed in 1927 by an Australian shearer named John Mules. While shearing a particularly flystrike-prone ewe, he accidentally clipped some of the skin around her tail and later noticed that the flystrike didn't return. He refined the process, and it was quickly adapted by other farmers.

Only one problem: Mulesing was often performed without anesthesia. And the cutting of any skin will cause pain. Animal rights groups have, rightly, brought this to global attention—hence the questions from customers. Perhaps you have a concern yourself.

Studies released in the *Australian Veterinary Journal* have confirmed that the application of a topical anesthetic "has the capacity to dramatically improve the welfare of lambs undergoing mulesing." A little over 21 percent of those Australian farms that practice mulesing do use topical anesthesia on the lamb.

Mulesing is now practiced only in Australia. It was completely banned in New Zealand as of October 2018. But even in Australia, a growing number of farms are committing to alternate prevention methods. As of 2016, mulesing-free farms represented 9.2 percent of Australia's total wool product, a number that has been steadily rising since.

Still, if you'd rather be able to point your customers to a wool yarn with zero possibility of a mulesing connection, simply consider yarns whose wool has been sourced in New Zealand, Argentina, Uruguay, the Falkland Islands, Great Britain, Ireland, Iceland, the United States and elsewhere. If the yarn labels don't state where the wool was sourced, contact the yarn company. They need to be able to answer this question, and your pushing will help. The more traceability they can provide, the more information you can give to your customers and the better you can teach them.

Seek yarn companies and/or fiber suppliers that are familiar with the Responsible Wool Standard (RWS) and the Global Organic Textile

Standard, two initiatives aimed at improving wool's global reputation. When farms obtain RWS certification, their fiber is tracked through the entire production process so that the chain of custody is fully traceable. When the yarn finally reaches you, you can rest assured it came from animals who were treated well, on land that was also treated well—something that could come in handy the next time a customer asks if wool is cruel. Just be aware that products can have as high as 30 percent inorganic fiber content and still get GOTS certification.

Looking to make your own yarn? Companies such as New Merino will help you establish a transparent supply chain of verifiable, non-mulesed wool. If you already have a yarn line, tell your wool broker that guaranteed non-mulesed wool is a priority for you. The greater the demand, the more farms will begin to shift. Ask your wool broker for more proof than a handshake. Your brand is on the line.

Even in New Zealand, where mulesing is no longer practiced, the ZQ Merino program has been established to bring together farmers who are committed to a higher level of long-term sustainable land stewardship, environmental practices and animal welfare.

## **"Yeah, I get that, but I still really don't feel comfortable about shearing. Is there any way I can know that my wool came from sheep that weren't harmed in any way?"**

This is a commonly asked question, and the solution is quite simple: Seek out farm yarns from smaller vendors who raise the sheep themselves. The more local, the better. Not only will you be able to offer visitors a truly unique souvenir, but you can tell them exactly where it came from, all the way down to the name of the shearer. Personally vouching for the farm and its practices can go a long way.

The other thing to remember is that sheep are a farmer's asset. It is in nobody's best interest to harm any sheep at shearing time: A stressed sheep will not be a productive one. Its wool quality will suffer. Any shearer who abuses sheep is damaging the farmer's bottom line. In the wool world, reputation is everything. Leave a trail of bloodied sheep in your wake, and you will not be hired back.

## **"What is Superwash, anyway?"**

We tend to use the term "Superwash" as freely as Kleenex and Q-Tips. But only those companies that have used a process certified by the Woolmark Corporation can legally use the term. Otherwise, the language should, in theory, say "machine-washable."

The most common practice for rendering wool machine-washable involves first running the fibers through a dilute chlorine bath. Chlorine and wool don't mix. The minute you put wool into even the mildest chlorine bath, the chlorine immediately starts dissolving the cuticle of the fiber. In this case, the exposure is dosed so that the nibbling only occurs along the very outer edges of the scales that would normally enmesh during wash. The fibers are then swiftly moved into a bath containing a synthetic polymer, usually Hercosett 125, that re-coats the recently nibbled fibers to protect them. They're still able to breathe, and they will absorb dye at a much greater rate than non-treated wool. But they will also survive a ride in the washing machine without felting.

## **"I hear that Superwash is horrible for the environment. Is this true?"**

The machine-washable process requires a dilute chlorine bath whose chlorine-to-water ratio is actually lower than what you'll find in most swimming pools. If you stick to wool processed in countries that enforce strict environmental regulations, you can take a small amount of comfort in knowing that the waste has been properly neutralized before disposal.

## **"But it has plastic, and plastic is bad, right?"**

Well, yes. Ultimately, it is. It's estimated that by 2050 there will be between 850 and 950 tons of plastic in the ocean. Machine-washable wool is treated with Hercosett 125, a wet-strength polyamide-epichlorohydrin resin often added to paper. It's an epoxy resin, albeit of a vastly diminished quantity than that in a 100 percent polyester yarn. If you have any



concerns, consider carrying one of the new “eco-washed” wools—such as those from Rosie Blue—that use a biopolymer in place of Hercosett 125.

It’s all a continuum. Yes, plastic is plastic and bleach is bleach. Absolutely. But machine-washable wool holds a very important place in our world. For some, it may be their very first introduction to wool. And for others, it may be the only way that wool can exist in their world. Wool, being a fundamentally agriculturally derived product, has so many additional benefits—the UV resistance, the breathability, the warmth and comfort, the flame resistance and the odor-resistance—that are worth remembering. Treated or not.

#### “Is it true all machine-washable wool comes from China?”

It’s important to differentiate between “comes from” and “is processed in.” While the majority of machine-washable wool is processed in China, the fibers themselves can come from anywhere. There *are* facilities in South America and, as of 2012, the United States that offer machine-washable wool processing. Chargeurs in South Carolina processes half the wool grown in the United States. The 500-acre facility even has its own waste-water treatment facility to clean up every drop of water that leaves the place. So yes, it is possible to obtain machine-washable wool that is 100 percent domestically produced. That said, the best organic wool processing in the world is currently taking place in China. Even Chargeurs sends all its certified organic wool to China. Things are changing.

#### “Why is wool so expensive?”

Unlike synthetic fibers, which can be churned out by machines 365 days a year, wool takes a year for a sheep to grow. During that time, the sheep need land on which to graze and a reliable supply of water. They need to be cared for and protected. Natural fibers tend to be more costly because they take more time and care to produce. They also last longer.

#### “Wool is itchy.”

The magical thing about wool is that it comes in all textures and colors and thicknesses. While some breeds will grow a fiber that doubles as a scouring pad, others grow fibers that are as fine as, or even softer than, cashmere.

While many focus on wool as a potential cause of irritation, wool actually has the potential to be part of the cure. Recent studies were conducted in which 17.5-micron or finer wool garments were worn directly against the skin of those who suffer from eczema. Wool was found to *reduce* their symptoms more than synthetic fibers.

While the synthetic fibers may have been technically finer, they lacked any of wool’s ability to breathe, manage moisture, and maintain a constant “climate” against the skin—all things that aid in the reduction of eczema symptoms.

#### “Nope. I can’t wear wool.”

It’s extremely important to respect your customer on this. If she tells you that wool is an irritant for her skin, know that the irritation is real to her and proceed with utmost caution. While a true wool allergy is rare, feeling skin irritation from wool is a real thing. And it’s important for your customer to feel heard and respected.

However, if your customer is open to talking about this a little more, or has a desire to keep trying because she *wants* to be able to wool, start asking questions. When did she first notice an irritation? What was she wearing? Ask her what kinds of wool she’s touched. Explain a little bit about microns and fiber grades, about irritation that can come

from residual chemicals that can linger in a yarn fresh from the mill.

Keep a mental list of the actual fineness of the wools you carry. Have a sample scarf available that was knit in the finest wool you have, and in the next finest, and the next finest, so that your customers can really experience each fabric on its own. Some find that the Superswash treatment minimizes skin irritation even further, so consider having a sample scarf out of a Superswash-treated fine wool as well. Again, only if your customer is open to this, encourage her to wear the scarf around the shop to see if she feels an irritation.

#### “Is there any reason not to wear synthetics?”

We can argue about the environment and animal welfare and the need always to provide affordable synthetic yarn options, but when it comes to synthetic fibers, one thing cannot be disputed: Flammability. For years now, the United States Department of Defense has mandated that all fabric that comes in contact with soldiers’ skin must be “no melt, no drip.” Wool plays a big part in that. Please remind customers of this when they’re buying yarn for baby clothes and blankets. A machine-washable wool is a billion times safer and healthier for babies—at least until they’re old enough to get up and run away from a fire on their own.

#### “Wool is too warm for me.”

We tend to think of wool as warm, but the better way to describe it is as an *insulator*. Wool excels at maintaining a constant climate for whatever it happens to be encompassing, whether it’s a sheep or a human—or a pizza. (Wool is even being used to insulate frozen foods.) In warm climates where 100 percent wool is out of the question, don’t give up on wool altogether. Blends are your friends! Quite possibly the best possible fiber pairing is wool and cotton, or wool and linen. The cellulose fibers provide fabulous air-conditioning and wet strength to the finished fabric, while the wool adds body, absorption and elasticity.

#### Talking the Talk

A very important nuance: In selling wool, or cashmere, or synthetics, always frame your selling points with the awareness that demonizing any fiber will ultimately come back to haunt you. Sell cashmere by saying it’s better than wool? There goes a potential wool customer. Sell wool by saying synthetics are bad and wool is good? There goes your synthetics market. Each argument you give will either limit or enhance your ability to sell something else later. You are building lasting impressions with your customers. They are trusting you. Use facts, refrain from judgment, and always let them establish the bottom line.

Now more than ever, people need to feel seen and heard. Our sense of trust is in jeopardy. In every encounter, you have the potential to bring people together. While there’s temptation to pit products against each other to demonize and divide—and doing so will get quick results and lots of clicks—it will ultimately only drive us further and further apart.

Thank you for being our front line. Thank you for your service to our community. You can help your customers navigate this increasingly challenging world. They trust you. Use your position wisely. Help them be the best, most educated allies for us all.

**Clara Parkes** is a New York Times best-selling author and wool ambassador. She is the world’s first and only professional yarn critic, an internet publishing pioneer and the author of seven books and hundreds of articles. Her upcoming book, *Vanishing Fleece: Adventures in American Wool* (out October 2019), details her adventures chasing a 676-pound bale of wool across America.



“WE’VE PUT A MAN ON THE MOON, BUT WE HAVEN’T BEEN ABLE TO IMPROVE UPON SHEEP SHEARING. IT IS ONE OF THE FEW HIGHLY MANUAL PROCESSES THAT WE HAVE NOT SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED TO AUTOMATE. TO THIS DAY, IT IS STILL DONE BY HAND.”





# OPEN TO ALL

CAN YOUR STORE  
REALLY BE A HAPPY PLACE  
IF NOT EVERYONE  
FEELS WELCOME?

BY Cecilia Nelson-Hurt

**W**hen the conversation on the lack of diversity and inclusion in the crafting community—specifically (at the time) the knitting community—began in earnest in January, it quickly went from “I don’t see myself in many areas of the community” to stories of fiberists saying, “At times I haven’t been made to feel welcome in yarn shops.”

On Instagram, story after story appeared detailing incidents of enthusiastic crafters being met with chilly receptions or snide remarks and/or being blatantly ignored in yarn shop after yarn shop.

Many crafters have shared their personal stories with me on the topic of inclusion. The examples ranged from not being acknowledged as they entered a store to encountering rude yarn shop employees. During a recent diversity talk at a fiber festival, one of the attendees broke down in tears as she described her feelings of hurt and isolation based on negative treatment in a yarn shop in town. At the end of our conversation, she decided to send a communication to the shop owner alerting her to her feelings, sharing the facts of the interaction and explaining her decision to take her money and her business elsewhere.

Not long ago, Gaye “GG” Glasspie of GGMadeit shared a yarn shop experience in which she was not acknowledged upon entering the store. GG assumed that no one had heard her entrance and went about browsing, but moments later, another customer entered the shop and this customer was greeted warmly. GG realized that the shop workers and their customers had heard her enter; they chose to ignore her. As you can imagine, this realization colored the entire yarn shop experience for GG.

## CUSTOMERS NOTICE CUSTOMER SERVICE

The 2019 State of the Customer Experience report, created by an independent retailer organization, shares data and research on buying behaviors, noting, “Of the consumers surveyed, 60 percent said they would stop doing business with a company if they experienced unfriendly service.”<sup>1</sup> A 2018 PricewaterhouseCoopers report, “Experience Is Everything: Here’s How to Get It Right,” revealed consumer views on and expectations of customer experience and found that consumers are willing to pay an increase of 16 percent more on products if they come with better customer interactions.<sup>2</sup>



The research supports the idea that consumers are savvy, with expectations of how and what they qualify as a good or not so good customer experience.

### MAKING EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME

The yarn shop experience is as much about the atmosphere of community as it is about the selection of yarn and supplies. Shop owners seeking to promote diversity and to create an inclusive environment while making a lasting impact on their customers can make simple changes that will ensure every customer feels welcomed and supported—and thus willing to spend money at the store.

Felicia Eve, owner of String Thing Studio in Brooklyn, New York, works to create an environment in which everyone who enters her shop feels at home. She encourages shoppers to engage, to touch and to feel the yarn. “It’s not a museum. This is a tactile experience! You must touch. Even if the person coming in seems a little apprehensive, we always acknowledge their presence and let them know that we are here if and when they need us.”

A simple “Hello, welcome to [Name of Shop]” goes a long way. The greeting is the first way you acknowledge everyone who enters—emphasis on “everyone.” The “Everyone Approach” ensures that no one is left out. Remember: Everyone is a potential customer, regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual identity/orientation, age or ability. If they cross the threshold of your shop, you should seek to get to know them and understand their needs. Make sure they know you’re there to help, answer questions and offer advice. Be accessible. Allow them space to explore and time to decide, of course, but remain alert should they have questions and need a staff member.

### THINK ABOUT YOUR MESSAGE

As you consider how diverse your store is, think about inclusivity on all levels. For example, do you speak all fiber languages? There isn’t a technique caste system: Knitting isn’t superior to crochet or vice versa. Do you call your weekly gathering a “Knit Night”? Consider how such language by its nature excludes crocheters. Would “Craft Night” be more welcoming of all techniques? Remember that the words you choose and the messages you promote will have an impact. As Glasspie says, “Just sell the yarn. Yarn is yarn, no matter the craft.”

If you live in a multicultural community, does your consumer base reflect the community in which you do business? Do you have a vision for the type of environment you seek to create and, more importantly, has this message been shared with all of your shop employees? It’s important that everyone who works in your shop be aligned with the atmosphere you seek to create. Felicia Eve says, “It is so important that your employees reflect who you are and the feeling that you

want your customers to have when they visit your shop. If you feel that your staff is not being genuine or the most attentive, understand that customers are feeling it too.”

At Knitty City in New York City, Pearl Chin and her employees constantly seek to create a friendly, welcoming environment. The Knitty City staff can be counted on to create a pleasant customer experience, providing help, advice and instructions to shop regulars and first-time visitors alike. In fact, Knitty City has posted the shop’s core values on their website, reinforcing their commitment and driving their actions to create a community. The statement reads: RESPECT ALL PEOPLE *because we’re all people*. PRACTICE KINDNESS *because kindness is the foundation of respect*. SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW *because someone else shared that knowledge with you*. BUILD COMMUNITY *because no one should have to knit alone*. INSPIRE CREATIVITY *because imagination is freedom*. HAVE FUN *just because!*

As you think about the messages your yarn shop is conveying, monitor your communications. Routinely check your social media pages and other platforms where customers share their experiences in your shop to see what experiences they are actually having. Not only does this afford you the ability to ensure they are receiving the kind of customer service you want; it also allows you to keep in touch. Encourage shoppers to stay connected so they feel at home in your store. Whether it’s your customer reward program, your mailing list or your social media pages, ask customers to remain in contact with you. This creates an opportunity to build the relationship and increases the likelihood that the shopper will return to your shop.

**If you live** IN A  
**MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY,**  
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### IN SERVICE

In the end, your shop is there to provide a service: the sale of yarn and crafting-related items. The added benefit is the ability to create a community in which each person who steps through the door feels welcomed and valued. According to Pearl Chin, “When I envisioned Knitty City, I knew what I wanted: a physical place where the whole knitting community could come together to celebrate working with their hands, explore beautiful materials and colors, and learn from one another. Besides being a hangout for knitters, I wanted it to be a place where friends, family and neighbors could come and feel comfortable. Our store is not only about the yarns. It’s about living a joyful life and sharing our stories.”

For me, my fiber happy place is where I can retreat after a hard day or week, connect with my community, make new friends and create something beautiful along the way. It’s important to me that I feel valued and welcomed—and I’m not different from any other customer. If asked, will all of your customers describe your yarn shop as their happy place? If not, what steps will you take to create an environment where all are welcomed and made to feel included?

1 - <https://www.cmo.com/features/articles/2018/4/19/new-study-finds-consumers-would-pay-more-for-better-cx-pwc.html#gs.5r5mvv>

2 - <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/press-releases/2018/experience-is-everything-heres-how-to-get-it-right.html>

**Cecilia Nelson-Hurt** (CreativeCeci on Instagram and Ravelry) is a Diversity Equity & Inclusion practitioner for L’Oréal USA, with more than 15 years of diversity experience. As a global knitter, Cecilia has traveled

to more than 90 yarn shops in 11 countries and counting. She shares her love of travel and knitting in her newly launched podcast, “Ceci Knits the World,” available on YouTube.



# SHIRLEY PADEN



A master of her craft, Shirley Paden refuses to rest on her laurels as she nears her thirtieth year as a knitwear designer. *YMN's* Erin Slonaker sat down to learn more about her work.

**ES: Let's start at the beginning: How did you learn to knit/crochet?**

**SP:** My grandmother taught me when I was 8 years old. I learned to knit using the British method, with the yarn held in the right hand.

**ES: What path took you to knitwear design?**

**SP:** I grew up sewing, and from an early age I was fascinated by the details of clothing construction. I did not study clothing design—my background is in French literature and business. In my book *Knitwear Design Workshop* and in an interview I did that aired on HGTV [find the video on [shirleypaden.com](http://shirleypaden.com)], I tell the story of being asked to help a pregnant coworker who was knitting her first sweater to bind off. After many years of not ever thinking of picking up knitting needles, I experienced a kind of epiphany as I took the small garment in my hands. That evening, I stopped by the yarn shop near my office and purchased yarn, a book and a pair of needles. From that day, my passion for hand knitting has never waned.

**ES: You launched your business in 1992, well before knitwear design was as popular as it is now. What was it like then?**

**SP:** The industry was smaller, but there were always passionate people around who loved the handmade art world. There were yarn shops that everyone in the industry knew. Each had its own

personality. Every yarn shop was a source of inspiration. Each owner seemed to know of every new item being introduced in the market. Independent dyers were beginning to make a mark on the industry, and the beauty of the dyed options was incredible. Even though book and yarn offerings were far fewer, it was a very exciting time.

**ES: How has the industry changed in the years since?**

**SP:** The internet opened doors in ways that had previously been unimaginable in the hand-knitting world: being able to purchase yarn, patterns and other knitting products 24/7, from every imaginable place on earth; being able to join groups where you could knit, chat and learn new techniques from knitters from all over the world; having a large variety of knitting-centered conferences and retreats. It really breathed new life into the hand-knitting industry.

**ES: Has being a BIPOC in the yarn industry influenced your work?**

**SP:** Quite honestly, I never thought about my ethnicity as it related to knitting and my design work. Since I did not come from a design school background, I entered the industry without much technical knowledge. Therefore, my focus was always placed on running as fast as I could to learn as much as possible about hand-knit fabric construction in order to develop my craft to a point of excellence. That has meant studying many knitting disciplines and learning about the cultures in which they originated. It has been a fascinating journey.

**ES: Where do you think the industry is headed?**

**SP:** We will continue to see creativity in yarn construction and dyeing techniques. The hand-knitting market appears to be asking for more of that in ways that are constantly new and different. Also, the desire for 100% natural fibers appears to be more than just a trend.

**ES: You've published one seminal book and are now self-publishing a new series. What made you shift away from traditional publishing?**

**SP:** Writing a book is an arduous creative process. For authors, it is their story, and a part of their creative process that they want to leave behind in the world. Being able to take control of that very personal process is important.

**ES: You've also embraced video. What drew you to the medium?**

**SP:** At the end of the day, we all enjoy storytelling. With video, people can relive the experi-

ences of the creator of a project and feel like they are a part of the story. It opens a dialogue that print alone cannot.

**ES: Tell me more about your new initiative and all that it entails.**

**SP:** I have had a team working with me for more than two years. With fingers crossed, this fall I will release a second design book that showcases the work of my students and those who participated in the five design-alongs that I held over a six-year period. Everyone whose designs are featured in the upcoming book used the techniques from my first book and stitch patterns that I used on designs for inspiration. It is a "duets" book—I am happy to be designing alongside the students. I will also release a design app in both Android and iOS versions. I have also purchased the rights to *Knitwear Design Workshop* and will now be self-publishing that book in both paperback and e-book formats.

**ES: While you're busy doing all this, you're still working Shirley Paden Custom Knits, in which you create custom designs for customers. Tell me more about the custom design process.**

**SP:** It's where my design journey began. It is where the understanding of precision in crafting hand-knit garments came of age for me. From the beginning, my customers could draw whatever they wanted, and I would take their measurements, select an appropriate stitch pattern and the yarn, then knit their dream pieces. I will always keep the haute couture custom design segment in the mix. It is still an overwhelming joy to take one of those deep design journeys.

**ES: How has this new venture reinvigorated your love of the craft, and how do you juggle all the endeavors?**

**SP:** For constant inspiration, I always go back to the days as a small child when I was so fascinated by seeing something beautiful growing from my grandmother's needles. Also, there are few professions where one can experience the thrill of total creation. My online design-along events took about a year because everyone had to get through the four steps of the design process together. Each person had to draw a sketch, then create a personality for their design by profiling it. That profile determined the type of yarn and the stitch pattern. All that had to be done before the technical aspects of the design could be worked out. Finally, the knitting could begin. I get to go through that deep creation process constantly. I feel like I am the luckiest girl alive.



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