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JANUARY 2020



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Endings

I'll get right to it: This is YMN's last issue.

In truth, this development has slowly been coming, as advertising dollars have dwindled in the last few years. Without that money, we can no longer produce the magazine and make it free to the trade, something we have always done in order to make it as accessible as possible. Of course, I'm incredibly sad—I feel that the industry is in transition, and helping shops to be stronger, smarter, and more flexible is important. But I also am realistic.

Six and a half years ago, we went from five times a year to three. Back then, I told you a little of the history of *Yarn Market News*—how it had begun in the 1970s but in the late '80s was shuttered. How Trisha Malcolm had found the old issues and encouraged our publisher and president, Art Joinnides, to relaunch it in 2005.

Nine years ago, January 2011, was my first issue of *YMN*. In my editor's letter I championed the work editor in chief Karin Strom had done to build an amazing foundation. I was excited to embark on a new chapter of my career. And what a chapter it's been: I've met so many of the people who shape our industry, I've knit so many sweaters in new-to-me yarn, I've traveled to a needle manufacturer in India, and I've watched freshly dyed yarn hanging to dry at a fiber factory. I got to be in the thick of things, doing what I love. But it's time to close the book on *YMN*, at least for now. Having seen it come back before, I know there's a chance it could do so again.

Before I go, I'd love to give thanks to those who've done so much with me in my time here. Of course, thanks to Art and Trisha, for believing in me and letting me make *YMN* mine. Thanks to Leslie Barber, my managing editor, who sat down with me on my first day and taught me how to make a magazine. In those early years, I could absolutely not have made an issue without Cheryl Kremetz and Leslie Petrovski, my contributing editors. Cheryl moved on after a few years but Leslie P. has been my stalwart, eager to dive in to new topics and suggesting brilliant ideas herself. The whole look and feel of the publication is the vision of our creative director, Joe Vior, who is personally responsible for every cover concept we've photographed. And my writers! There have been so many, but Daryl Brower deserves a special shout-out, for being the most eloquent writer who can capture a concept even when I've given her only a sketchy topic to explore. Endless thanks to Christina Behnke, Renee Lorion, Claire Lui, Carolyn Noyes, Maryam Siddiqi, Carol J. Sulcoski, and our many writers from the last 15 years, for all their research and work. And thanks to our Events team—Gabrielle Ald, Beth Ritter, Karima Amir, and Carol Pelletier—for all their work on the YMN Smart Business Conference.

Erin Slonaker, Editor in Chief



on the cover

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THE KNITTER'S **PLANNER**



creativity holistically,” explains Kara Gott Warner, who collaborated with Stephanie Palmer, creator of the Quilter’s Planner and now the Knitter’s Planner, to bring this version to life.

Filled with thoughtful knitting-specific details like monthly calendars listing marquee fiber events and weekly calendars with stitch patterns and tips, the planner lets you choose from nine covers, four different weekly calendar designs, and whether you want your weeks to start on Sunday or Monday. You can even augment your planner with add-ons like clip-in Add-a-Page; erasable laminated Master To-Do List, Shopping List and Meal

Planner bookmarks; a special gauge ruler (licensed from master knitter Ann Budd); a stick-on pen holder; and a clear zipper pouch.

Warner, who is a business coach for creatives and works with people on time management, likes that individuals can tailor the planner to their organizational style. “We’re all different and can embrace who we are,” she says. “I find that if it’s on the calendar, it’s like committing to a protocol.”

In the projects section, knitters will find Project Planner pages (attach gauge swatches

here), a Projects at a Glance page, needle and hooks inventory, and yarn stash management pages. The reference section offers an all-important glossary of abbreviations, common knitting techniques with illustrations, a guide to the yarn weight system, and color theory info.

The planner retails for \$48.95—more if you buy accessories—and is only available online. Yarn shops can take advantage of the Knitting Planner’s affiliate program, which offers 20 percent on sales accrued through a unique link. (To register, go to knittersplanner.com/affiliate-dashboard.)

“The value is there for all the things you get,” Warner says. “There’s the planning, but it’s also helping you with your knitting and inspiring you every day. We’re really excited that it’s here and knitters have something like this.” Visit knittersplanner.com.



Are you looking to plan your life sweater by sweater while also allowing for kids’ swim meets, doctor’s appointments, and oh, yes, work meetings? Then the **Knitter’s Planner** is a 2020 must-have.

Part calendar (weekly and monthly), part project planner and knitting reference, the Knitter’s Planner is a customizable day planner designed specifically for busy knitters seeking to organize their lives creatively with knitting top of mind.

“We wanted this to become for knitters a way to bring together your life and your

JIMMY BEANS BUYS **MAD|TOSH**

Jimmy Beans Wool, which recently scooped up the brands Namaste and della Q, announced late last year that it has acquired the uber-popular hand-dye company Mad|Tosh, now branding as **Mad|Tosh**.

The largest hand-dyer in the United States, Mad|Tosh was started in 2006 by Amy Hendrix as an Etsy shop. Today, Mad|Tosh yarns, which are available in a wide variety of yarn bases in more than 100 colorways, sell in hundreds of yarn shops around the world.

“Yarn is such an important part of Jimmy Beans’ DNA, and with the addition of Mad|Tosh, it feels like a match made in yarn heaven,” says Jimmy Beans chief knitter Laura Zander (pictured). “We’ve been carrying



Mad|Tosh yarn for years, and to see what Amy and [her husband and business partner] John have created is remarkable. Their eye for color and ability to take dyeing from their kitchen to becoming the largest hand-dyer in the country is just incredible. We hope that we can continue their legacy, while adding our customer service and marketing touch to the brand!”

For now, Mad|Tosh headquarters will remain in Fort Worth, Texas, and Mad|Tosh yarns will continue to be available on the Mad|Tosh website, online at Jimmy Beans, through Mad|Tosh retailers, and via Jimmy Beans at consumer shows.

Mad|Tosh is Jimmy Beans Wool’s largest acquisition to date.

BIPOC IN FIBER EXCEEDS CROWDFUNDING GOAL

Before Instagram caught fire with posts about racial inclusion in the yarn industry—or lack thereof—British knitwear designers **Jeanette Sloan** and fiber artist–scholar Lorna Hamilton-Brown, both of whom are black, discovered they struggled naming other black designers except for Shirley Paden, author of *Knitwear Design Workshop*.

As part of her research for the article “Black People Do Knit,” which ran in *Knitting Magazine* in 2018, Sloan began posting names of diverse designers and crafters she collected on her blog at jeanettesloandesign.com. As the list grew and the conversation about racial inclusion and racism in the yarn industry mounted, Sloan realized that the list could better serve the industry as a stand-alone resource where editors, yarn companies, and consumers could find BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) professionals to work with. When multihyphenate knitter and digital media wiz Alyson Chu contacted Sloan offering to share her web design expertise, Sloan suddenly had a partner with the skills to transform her static list into a dynamic website.

In September 2019, Sloan mounted a one-month crowdfunder campaign, asking for £20,000 to pay for bipocinfiber.com’s initial branding and development, maintenance, and a year’s worth of content. Within 28 days, **BIPOC in Fiber** had secured £32,039 (approximately \$42,000) from 533 supporters.

“It was incredible,” Sloan said about surpassing her fundraising goal. “It was a sign of people wanting something positive to happen. It’s not going to solve every problem, and it’s not a magic wand. It’s one way of doing something positive.”

Scheduled to launch in 2020, BIPOC in Fiber will feature a BIPOC fiberati database that will be searchable by craft, location, and skills. “If you want a crochet designer or indie dyer in southeast England,” Sloan explains, “you’ll find it.”

The site will also feature profiles of BIPOC professionals, business advice, and other articles. Sloan estimates that the database currently has about 200 listings of BIPOCs working in fiber.

“I hope that BIPOC in Fiber will help to change the landscape,” she says. “Not just, oh, there’s an Asian or Indigenous person. I’d like to see a lot of contributions from BIPOC across the board, from models, photography, and art direction to writing and tech editing. I’d like it to be unremarkable, to be the norm, the industry standard—to not just check the box but follow through at every stage.”

Watch for updates at bipocinfiber.com.



SWATCH OF LIFE

Is it possible that one day we’ll be able to binge-watch a docu-series about knitting and crochet?

If the team behind the nascent series **Swatched** has anything to say about it, we’ll be streaming a show about the life and times of yarn crafters soon.

Like the Netflix documentary series *Chef’s Table*, *Swatched* profiles the life and creative work of a fiber artist, illuminating not only how beautiful knits come into the world but also challenging assumptions about who conceives them.

“Once I started knitting and designing I always wondered why there wasn’t a makers series on knitting and crochet designers,” says designer and consulting producer Meghan Jones, who originated the project. “Most pattern designers, like artists, work alone bringing patterns to life in their off time, with few being able to support themselves financially from pattern sales alone. But how does their work come to life? I know what my process looks like, but what about theirs?”

A young production company that focuses on serialized content, Cereal Made developed the pilot, showcasing fiber arts designer Angela Tong. The eight-plus-minute video features close-ups of Tong sketching, knitting, weaving, and talking about her work and family along with hero shots of her creations.

Currently, the team is pursuing partnerships to take this proof of concept and turn it into a longer series. “We want to focus on grouping subjects into themes, like the renegades, or the traditionalists, so we can tell the stories of multiple artists per episode,” explains Heather Taylor, executive producer and director of *Swatched*. “We’d love to make this a global show, but it depends on the series’ budget. No matter what, we will be able to tell a diverse story about designers from all types of backgrounds and approaches no matter where they come from in the world.” Watch the pilot at vimeo.com/366321615.



WILD HAIR



Most of us have seen a lot of yarn in our time. But compared with the fiber extravaganza that's about to check in at the Sweet Tooth Hotel gallery in Dallas, we might have seen nothing yet.

Sponsored by the Craft Yarn Council and hairdressing brand Toni&Guy USA, **Intangible** is a fiber art installation opening this spring in the immersive art space *not* hostelry called the Sweet Tooth Hotel. The exhibit will feature an A-list of artists and fiber folks including crochet designer Twinkie Chan, world-famous yarn bomber London Kaye, illustrator and fiber artist Niki Dionne, installation artist and yarn bomber Hannah Busekrus, artist Molly Sydnor, illustrator Alli Koch, and fiber artist Jackie Lawrence.

To promote the installation, Sweet Tooth hosted a fashion-show preview on I Love Yarn Day, October 12, 2019, complete with models outfitted in voluminous yarn wigs and braided-rug fashions.

"It was really cool to see yarn used in ways that you wouldn't even imagine," says Jenny Bessonette, executive director of the Craft Yarn Council (CYC).

In the formal exhibit, visitors can expect a tactile tour of the Sweet Tooth Hotel that takes them through the 5,000-square-foot venue with different rooms (including bathrooms) and spaces devoted to each artist. This multidisciplinary fiber extravaganza will showcase not just knitting but also crochet, latch-hooking, and other yarn arts. An education wall will enlighten visitors about yarn and the techniques deployed to create the works of art.

During the installation, which runs most of 2020, visitors can partake of knitting and crochet classes, sample from the cereal bar featuring alcoholic and non-alcoholic items, and shop the gallery store. One dollar from each ticket sold will benefit CYC's charity, the Warm Up America Foundation, which supplies knitted and crocheted items to people in need.

Yarn for the event has been donated by Lion Brand Yarn and Red Heart.

"The amount of yarn is going to be impressive," observes Sarah Guenther, public relations coordinator for the CYC, "at least 15,000 skeins."

When the exhibit is complete, some creations will go to Warm Up America, while others will be saved for later pop-up installations around the United States.

"What will be done with these yarns will be amazing," Bessonette says. "Everything in the exhibit will raise awareness of yarn and yarn crafting."

Ready to book airfare? Show tickets can be had at sweettoothhotel.com.

THE LITTLE WOOL MILL THAT COULD

After nearly nine years of fundraising, jumping bureaucratic hurdles, wrestling industrial machinery, and starring in reads like Stephany Wilkes's *Raw Material: Working Wool in the West*, **Mendocino Wool and Fiber Inc.** is finally making yarn.

"It's surreal that we have a product we've been talking about, finally being produced and not just experimented with," says Sarah Gilbert, who co-founded the mill with her husband, Matt Gilbert. "We have been waiting for so long."

Located in Ukiah, California, the mill provides skirting, scouring, carding, pin-drafting, and now spinning services to local growers who in the past had to ship fleeces for processing or discard them for want of a regional mill.



Though California is the largest wool producer in the country, the state mills only about 0.03 percent of its wool, according to the fiber systems advocacy organization Fibershed. Mendocino Wool, which started producing carded sliver about 18 months ago, joins a handful of other small processors in California that can add value to the mostly fine wool fleeces grown in the state.

"There is a whole body of machinery knowledge that doesn't exist anymore," Matt says about the steep learning curve to get up and running. "We've gone to the school of hard knocks in mill machinery."

The Mendocino mill not only processes wool but other fibers such as alpaca, llama, and goat. For information, email info@mendowool.com.

A CORAL AND JADE ANNIVERSARY

If you've been stashing for a while, you probably have some razzle-dazzley yarn from the dye pots of **Prism Yarns' Laura Bryant**.

One of the early hand-dyers in the industry, Prism Yarns was founded by Bryant in 1984 before hand-dyed yarns were a thing. Over the years, the company has become famous for over-the-top hanks like those from its Stuff collection, which features 30 to 40 different hand-dyed, gauge-related yarns tied together end-to-end.

The company has continued to innovate with lines such as Prism's Sandwashed solids, kettle-dyed tonals that complement the Stuff and hand-dyed multis; beautiful, ombré Gradients; Layers, a multistep layering dye process that yields subtle, non-pooling colorways; and precision-dyed Ikat and Shades colorways.

One thing that has stayed true through the years: Bryant's commitment to sell wholesale only (with the exception of occasional open studios). "I've always honored the traditional distribution chain," she says. "We do not sell retail. We sell wholesale to stores and rely on them to educate customers and teach customers about knitting and Prism."

To celebrate 35 years in the yarn industry, Bryant has created a coral-and-jade (traditional and modern gifts marking this anniversary) hang tag; is working on a Prism greatest-hits design booklet featuring



bestsellers such as her Sonata Jacket and Foxy Cowl; and is hosting a day-long event starting at the St. Petersburg, Florida, Museum of Fine Arts with a color class, lunch, museum tour, and trip to Prism Yarns and then an anniversary dinner at the Bryants' yacht club. The celebration culminates in a five-day Western Caribbean cruise April 18–23, co-sponsored by the yarn shop Great Yarns.

"You can jump on a bandwagon and make changes or continue to go your own way," Bryant says. "I have reinvented Prism several times. I was the only hand-dyer that worked with fashion yarns. People think that's all we do, but we have beautiful classic yarns like everyone else."

GO PRO

While there are many summits in knitting, Mount Everest is arguably the **Knitting Guild Association's** Master Hand Knitting Program.

Notorious for its rigor, the program, which requires the near-perfect rendering of dozens of swatches, projects ranging from mittens to self-designed Aran and colorwork sweaters, plus research and book and magazine reviews, has only certified 350 master knitters since its inception in 1987.

To meet the needs of other highly skilled knitters, who may not want to write disquisitions on Bavarian knitting or design cabled knitwear, TKGa debuted a new certification last year as a training ground for sample/test knitters and finishers.

The Professional Knitter Certification is a course that requires no writing, research, or design but does take knitters through their paces of swatching and knitting successful projects on deadline. Unlike the master knitter program, which is self-directed, the professional program is a course of study that provides students with an instructor who acts as a teacher-mentor throughout and serves as a professional reference upon completion.

"It's very practical," explains Arenda Holladay, president of the board of TKGa and editor of *Cast On* magazine. "This is for people who want to have their knitting evaluated, improve their finishing, and tell people in their circle that they're a professional."

The program also targets people who want to work as sample

knitters or finishers or who start the self-directed master knitter program and realize they need more assistance.

The program is divided into three modules, each of which costs \$150. The first module launched September 26, 2019, and covers knitting to gauge and basic techniques with a final project of a toe-up, short-row-heel sock. The second module, which premiered in December, takes knitters through interpreting and reproducing complicated stitch patterns, swatching for specialized finishing techniques, and the completion of two baby sweaters. The final module, due out in 2020, asks knitters to complete a final project as a sample knitter with their instructor acting in the role of a designer. This module also provides career insight into how to work with designers and establish oneself as a sample knitter. Knitters are given one year to complete each portion of the program.

Those who jump in will also receive a reference guide with intel on arcana such as how to graft differing stitch patterns together.

"A lot of people want to be test knitters," Holladay says of TKGa's decision to develop the program. "There are people who want to knit Thea Colman's latest pattern first. For people who want to do this, it will give them a leg up. For designers, they'll know that their test knitter passed this certification and that the knitting will be good so they can post on Instagram and sell patterns."

For information, visit tkga.org.

MARKET REPORT

THERE WILL BE NO FOOLISH WAND-WAVING

It's official: The first Warner Bros.–sanctioned knitting book based on the Harry Potter films drops January 28.

Already an Amazon No. 1 bestseller (textile and costume category) prior to release, **Harry Potter: Knitting Magic: The Official Harry Potter Knitting Pattern Book** features 25 wizard-worthy projects stripped from the silver screen, along with costume sketches from the films, behind-the-scenes scoops, film stills, and more.

"From the cleverness of projects to the list of amazing people who worked with me," says author and Harry Potter superfan Tanis Gray, "if I wasn't part of it, I would buy it."

Gray—a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design who has enjoyed her own magical career as an editor and maker for companies like HBO, Martha Stewart Living, and Focus Features—had fantasized about doing a Harry Potter knitting book.

"At New Year's my husband and I always talk about what our personal and work goals are," she says. "And every year, I would say, 'This is the year. Maybe this is the Harry Potter year and I'll be asked to participate.'"

Last January, when Gray got the email from publisher Insight Editions, she thought it was a joke. "But it was almost like it was kismet. I was hoping to do it for so long."

The book was a rush job. But with nine other titles under her knitting belt and a little magic, Gray conjured a dream team of designers, curated a roster of projects that ranged from toys and



accessories to complete garments, and sourced yarns based on colors from the films.

"It was really important to have a wide variety of skill levels for the book and a wide range of sizing—we sized up to a 68-inch bust—and have a mix of models that looked like everybody. This is a book for everybody."

Potterheads can expect project stars like replicas of Dolores Umbridge's pink cat stole, Mrs. Weasley's monogrammed Christmas sweaters, and Hogwarts house scarves, along with whimsical designs such as a mobile of stuffed toys, a capelet inspired by the ladies of Beauxbatons Academy of Magic, and more. Designers include Dana Williams-Johnson, Dianna Walla, and Susan Claudino-Aguilar.

That Gray could combine her love of knitting with her passion for Harry Potter made her tenth book title a dream job. "I've already heard that the number of preorders is amazing," Gray says. "People love these books, and so many people knit. When two of your favorite things come together and you see this book you wish you had, you have to get it." No magic wand required.

LET IT SNOW



Can't get warm this winter? For \$5.99 retail, you can score a ball of Red Heart's high-tech **Heat Wave** (198yds/100g), a four-ply, worsted-weight acrylic that warms up by as much as 12 degrees when exposed to sunlight, even on cloudy days.

The technology responds to UV light, generating heat outdoors but cooling off indoors. "It's a special treatment that's infused from the beginning, so it won't wash out," explains Amy Olsen, who leads product development at Red Heart. "It's not temporary—it's ingrained within the fiber."

Red Heart launched the yarn last August with 13 colors and more than 30 patterns that emphasize cold-weather performance, including knitted and crocheted scarves, hats, blankets, sweaters, and dog coats. The yarn is manufactured in the United States and is currently available online and at JoAnn stores in the United States and Michael's and Walmart in Canada. "New fibers are being developed all the time," says Olsen. "We are always looking to find the next new thing."



FIBER FREE BOX

Anyone familiar with the concept of a free box—a central location where people can donate or recycle goods—will understand the impetus behind the **Fiber Community Fund**.

Started by Sultan Alrasheed, a Chicago-area yarn dyer, the Fiber Community Fund provides free patterns and yarn to people in need with the goal of making the yarn arts accessible to all. “With the conversation in our community highlighting BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), I wondered, how do I fit in to that?” says Alrasheed. “I love designing and creating, so it felt right to try and give back.”

He launched with only his own patterns in October 2019, but Alrasheed was soon inundated with offers from designers and dyers for free patterns, yarn, and other forms of assistance. At this writing, the fund has 500 patterns along with preliminary funds to help with gifts of yarn and patterns not yet available in the fund. The fund has already provided 50 patterns and three yarn gifts to recipients.

“The fiber community’s generosity is overwhelming, and they open their hearts and give without being asked,” Alrasheed says. “It motivates me to work harder to benefit this community more.”

To access the fund, people can complete a private Google Sheet

request form available from @fibercommunityfund on Instagram. The system is entirely based on self-identified need. “We have so much shame in our society in asking for help,” he says. “To counteract that shame, there are no questions, and I handle things as privately as I can. If someone can afford it, but they have a need to get the pattern, that need is valid as well.”

The Fiber Community Fund is currently accepting financial contributions through Ko-fi and PayPal as well as gifts of size-inclusive patterns that are accessible to people with vision challenges (patterns offered in larger, clear fonts in single-column formats) and yarn. Alrasheed is working on establishing the Fiber Community Fund as a 501(c)(3).

“I really want to close that gap we have in the society and in the community,” Alrasheed explains. “I like talking to people on Instagram, and I’ve asked, ‘You’ve commented about this sweater, why didn’t you make it?’ A lot of people are saying the cost of yarn. They are shying away from making those sweaters because of cost.”

To donate, visit @fibercommunityfund or Alrasheed directly at @spunnomaditty on Instagram.



TNNA AT CREATIVATION

The National Needlearts Association (TNNA) has joined forces with the Association for Creative Industries (AFCI) to become part of AFCI’s **Creativation**, North America’s largest trade show for creative industries.

The show, which runs January 16–20 in Phoenix, Arizona, attracts thousands of attendees from more than 50 countries. TNNA’s participation in Creativation replaces its regular winter market in Austin, Texas. Instead, TNNA will occupy its own pavilion on the Creativation trade floor.

The new partnership allows all TNNA members to participate in Creativation at AFCI member rates. AFCI addresses industries that include the needlearts as well as paper crafts, art supplies, beading, home décor, and other suppliers of creative pursuits.

According to TNNA, “collaborating with AFCI creates more opportunities for TNNA members to network and learn from creative professionals outside of their normal wheelhouse to foster new ideas and innovative creations.”

The summer TNNA trade show will take place as planned, May 27–31, 2020, in Cleveland, Ohio.

For information, visit tnna.org/events.



**January 16–20
Creativation (with TNNA Pavilion)**

Phoenix Convention Center
Phoenix, Arizona
creativationshow.org

**January 16–19
Knitting LIVE! by Vogue Knitting New York**

New York Marriott Marquis
New York, New York
vogueknittinglive.com/newyork2020

**January 23–26
Oxford Fiber Arts Festival**

Powerhouse Community Arts Center and Pavilion
Oxford, Mississippi
oxfordarts.com/events/fiberfest

**January 25
Winter Woolfest**

Columbian Theater
Wamego, Kansas
winterwoolfest.com

**February 9
Boston Farm & Fiber Festival**

Boston Public Market
Boston, Massachusetts
newenglandfarmtofiber.com/events

**February 14–16
Midwest Fiber Frolic**

Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
midwestfiberfrolic.com

**February 20–23
Stitches West**

Santa Clara Convention Center
Santa Clara, California
knittinguniverse.com/west2020

**February 27–March 1
The Stitch Festival**

Business Design Centre
London, England
thestitchfestival.co.uk

**March 10–14
Bandera Fiber and Arts Week**

Suzoo's Wool Works
Bandera, Texas
suzoos.com/bfaw

**March 13–14
Carolina Fiber Fest**

Expo Center, NC State Fairgrounds
Raleigh, North Carolina
carolinafiberfest.org

Fibres West

Field House behind the Langley Events Centre
Langley, BC, Canada
fibreswest.com

Jay County Fiber Arts Festival

Jay Community Center
Portland, Indiana
fiberarts.visitjaycounty.com

**March 13–15
Delmarva Wool and Fiber Expo**

Ocean City Convention Center
Ocean City, Maryland
woolandfiber.com

Knitting Live! by Vogue Knitting Seattle

Meydenbauer Convention Center
Seattle, Washington
vogueknittinglive.com

**March 20–22
Pittsburgh Creative Arts Festival**

Doubletree by Hilton
Green Tree, Pennsylvania
pghknitandcrochet.com

**March 21
Heartland Fiberpalooza**

Winterset Middle School
Winterset, Iowa
heartlandfiber.net/about-fiberpalooza.htm

**March 22
Homespun Yarn Party**

Historic Savage Mill
Savage, Maryland
homespunyarnparty.blogspot.com

**March 23
Black Swamp Spinners Guild Market Day and Fiber Fair**

Junior Fair Building
Wood County Fairgrounds
Bowling Green, Ohio
blackswampspinnersguild.org

**March 26–28
A Maker's Experience**

Central Wisconsin
midwestfiberartstrails.org/threaded-streams-2020

Stitches United

Connecticut Convention Center
Hartford, Connecticut
knittinguniverse.com/United2020

**March 27–29
Knit City Montreal: A Modern Fibre Festival**

Le Centre Sheridan Montreal
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
knitsocial.ca/montreal/welcome-knit-city-montreal

**March 28–29
Buckeye Alpaca Show**

Arena Complex, Summit County Fairgrounds
Tallmadge, Ohio
buckeyealpacashow.com

Midwest Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association International Alpaca Show

American Royal Hale Arena
Kansas City, Missouri
mopaca.org/MOPACA-Alpaca-Show

**April 2–5
Dallas–Fort Worth Fiber Fest**

Irving Convention Center
Irving, Texas
dfwfiberfest.org

**April 4
Fiber Market**

Union Bluff Hotel
York Beach, Maine
yarnseller.com/fiber-marketplace

**April 4–5
Alpacapalooza**

Clark County Event Center
Ridgefield, Washington
alpacawa.org

Spring Fiber Expo

Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds
Ann Arbor, Michigan
fiberexpo.com

YarnCon

Chicago Journeymen Plumbers Union Hall
Chicago, Illinois
yarncon.com

**April 16–18
World's Largest Textile Garage Sale**

Textile Center
Minneapolis, Minnesota
textilecentermn.org/garagesale

**April 17–18
The Fiber Event**

Putnam County Fairgrounds
Greencastle, Indiana
thefiberevent.com

**April 24–25
Smoky Mountain Fiber Arts Festival**

Great Smoky Mt. Heritage Center
Townsend, Tennessee
smokymountainfiberartsfestival.org

**April 25
Connecticut Sheep, Wool and Fiber Festival**

North Haven Fairgrounds
North Haven, Connecticut
ctsheep.com

Powhatan's Festival of Fiber

3920 Marion Harland Lane
Powhatan, Virginia
powhatansfestivaloffiber.com

Toronto Knitters Frolic

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

Local Yarn Store Day

Nationwide
tnna.org/events/local-yarn-store-day

**April 25–26
Mid-Plains Fiber Fair**

York County Fairgrounds
York, Nebraska
midplainsfiberfair.com

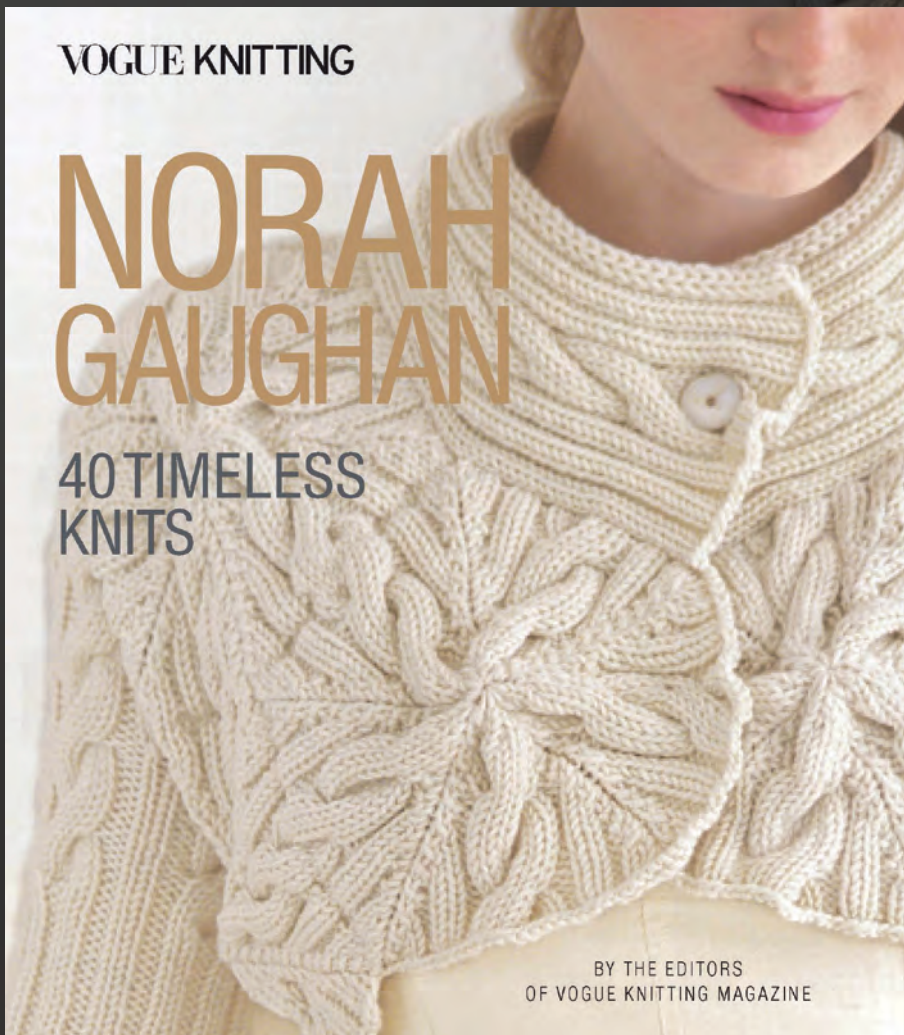
Wisconsin Alpaca and Fiber Fest/The Great Midwest Alpaca Festival

Alliant Energy Center
Madison, Wisconsin
wisconsinalpacafiberfest.com

**April 29–May 3
Interweave Yarn Fest**

Embassy Suites Loveland Hotel
Loveland, Colorado
interweaveyarnfest.com

Celebrate **30 years** of stunning textures, mesmerizing cables and innovative constructions with 40 of **Norah Gaughan's most memorable designs from Vogue Knitting.**



ISBN 978-1-64021-027-1 • Hardcover • \$24.95 • 176 pages

"[This book] embodies the best of Norah Gaughan's brilliant career and is a must-have for every knitter's library, both for the creative patterns and the inspiration..." —Deborah Newton

"I have followed Norah's designing career from the very beginning... [She] is indeed one of knitting's great treasures." —Meg Swansen

"Norah specs her proportions to fit and to flatter a variety of body types. Her muse seems to be the knitter herself." —Margery Winter

"[Norah's] avid curiosity and enduring commitment to our craft has enriched the world of knitting in ways rarely achieved by a single designer." —Jared Flood



WOOLLY WOOLLY



Natural colors get us back to our roots as yarn lovers.

SKACEL COLLECTION/SCHOPPEL REGGAE

Specs: 16 colors; 100% merino wool; 109yds/50g

Gauge: 18 sts = 4" on U.S. 8–10 needles

Distinctions: Reggae's single strand is slightly felted, giving the finished fabric a unique look and feel. Besides 16 solids, Reggae is available in ombré, print, and mélange colors. Finished projects can be felted further.

Projects: Showcase this yarn in cables, crochet, and other highly textured stitches.

By Renee Lorion

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARCUS TULLIS

MANOS DEL URUGUAY WOOL CLASICA

Specs: 89 colors; 100% wool; 138yds/100g

Gauge: 14–18 sts = 4" on U.S. 8–10 needles

Distinctions: One of the woolly best, this yarn is a substantial single spun from Corriedale sheep in Uruguay. Often lauded for its wide palette of colors, Wool Clásica is also gorgeous in natural shades such as the Light/Undyed Heather shown here.

Projects: Feature this hand-spun beauty in a simple stockinette-stitch pullover, sure to become a wardrobe staple.



CASCADE ECOLOGICAL WOOL

Specs: 16 colors; 100% natural Peruvian wool; 478yds/250g

Gauge: 14–16 sts = 4" on U.S. 9–10 needles

Distinctions: This bulky-weight yarn comes in a delightfully large skein and is available in a palette of natural colors, from ecru to ebony.

Projects: The generous put-up makes this a great choice for garments and larger projects like blankets. Try mixing the natural shades in a pieced afghan.

PLYMOUTH HOMESTEAD TWEED

Specs: 13 colors; 90% wool, 10% Donegal; 191yds/100g

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

Distinctions: This worsted-weight two-ply yarn combines wool with tweedy nubs for a rustic look.

Projects: A great choice for menswear, like the Men's Pullover 3176 from Plymouth Yarn Design Studio, worked in a simple texture pattern.



BLUE SKY FIBERS WOOLSTOK

Specs: 21 colors; 100% fine highland wool; 123yds/50g

Gauge: 20–24 sts = 4" on U.S. 6–11 needles

Distinctions: Work this versatile DK-weight on a wide range of needle sizes. The naturals and several blues are available in larger 150-gram skeins; the full palette, in 50-gram skeins.

Projects: The mix of skein weights is perfect for stranded colorwork: Pick a larger skein for the background shade, then play with hue and value using the smaller-skein colors.



ROWAN VALLEY TWEED

Specs: 20 colors; 100% wool; 226yds/50g

Gauge: 24 sts = 4" on U.S. 3 needles

Distinctions: This wool tweed hails from Rowan's hometown of Huddersfield and reflects its Yorkshire heritage in the names of its colors. A fingering-weight two-ply, Valley Tweed is light, lofty, and ready for colorwork.

Projects: Combine two shades to make Marie Wallin's Tیره, a stunning colorwork heirloom sweater.



MALABRIGO WORSTED

Specs: 102 colors; 100% merino wool; 210yds/100g

Gauge: 18 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–9 needles

Distinctions: Worsted is a pure merino single, soft enough to be worn next to the skin. Available in kettle-dyed solid, semisolid, and variegated shades, as well as the creamy natural pictured here.

Projects: Whip up the Orchids and Fairy Lights hat from Tiny Owl Knits with just one skein of Worsted.



BERROCO MERCADO

Specs: 20 colors; 100% Peruvian highland wool; 164yds/100g

Gauge: 15–16 sts = 4" on U.S. 9–10 needles

Distinctions: A sturdy, round wool in a quick-knitting heavy worsted weight, Mercado is great for cabling and is a go-to for accessories and gift knitting.

Projects: Consider Amy Christoffers's Dhener pattern, a cozy ruana worked in garter stitch with lovely front cables.



KELBOURNE LUCKY TWEED

Specs: 13 colors; 100% merino wool; 210 yds/100g

Gauge: 16–18 sts = 4" on U.S. 7–8 needles

Distinctions: Hailing from Donegal, Ireland, this authentic tweed yarn is flecked with rich nubs of color. At an easy-knitting Aran weight, Lucky Tweed is a natural choice for garments.

Projects: The cabled Kelby pullover from Kate Gagnon Osborn is the perfect project for this timeless yarn.

▼ **Beginner's Guide to Colorwork Knitting: 16 Projects and Techniques to Learn to Knit With Color**

By Ella Austin
SewandSo; \$22.99
ISBN 978-1-4463-0741-0

Pretty as those solid-color FOs are, at some point your knitting eyes (and your wardrobe?) will start hankering for color. These 16 beginner-ready projects are mostly small items (quicker, less-intimidating



knits than, say, a first Fair Isle sweater) with a colorwork pattern that is repetitive enough to keep you

knitting without having to refer to the chart for each next stitch. The how-to section presents colorwork techniques simply—everything from carrying the unused strands up the side to defining the oft-feared float and why it's important to trap it. Also included are illustrated basics of knitting, beginning with the cast-on, which makes this book a learn-how guide for those who have never worked a stitch and whether they intend to change colors or not. And, as with many beginner-level books, this one offers experienced knitters fast-off-the-needles projects.

▼ **Crochet with London Kaye: Projects and Ideas to Yarn Bomb Your Life**

By London Kaye
Abrams; \$24.99
ISBN 978-1-4197-3807-4

Not many stitchers can list yarn-bombing as a full-time job, but



London Kaye does. From her early days on Brooklyn's street-art scene creating

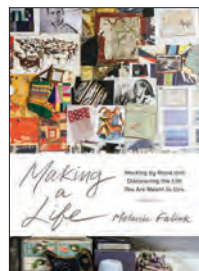
what she calls "soft graffiti" and affixing it to chain-link-fence "cans" to more recent custom pieces commissioned by such

brands as Coach and Starbucks, Kaye's crochet art is, deceptively, composed only of single crochet. And the designs in this book are made with that same singular stitch, so executing them doesn't require an encyclopedic knowledge of crochet, just a desire to express yourself in yarn beyond garment-making. There are five "indoor" projects—yarn art on a smaller, more personal scale, from a reusable shopping tote and the A-to-Z alphabet to the sneakers on the book's cover—and eight whimsical "outdoor" designs that include a tire wrap and bike-rack cozy, along with Kaye's now-trademark eyeball. If you want to go big in the big outdoors like Kaye, she does remind readers to get permission from the owner of the public space.

▼ **Making a Life: Working by Hand and Discovering the Life You Are Meant to Live**

By Melanie Falick
Artisan; \$35
ISBN 978-1-57965-744-4

Time to dream about making but no time to *do*? Or are you an active maker just needing a little mojo



boost? From sewist, shoemaker, quilter, basket-maker, and wool dyer to metalsmith, yarn store owner, and

furniture maker, Falick's artisan profiles reveal the life-affirming power of working with your hands. While the how-I-got-started premise for these profiles is familiar, the stories are not, with some makers beginning with a preferred medium but finding bliss in an accidental one (Joelle Hoverson, from painter to yarn entrepreneur; Alex Devol, from fabric to wood), and others traveling their original artistic path, widening it as they go (Lotta Anderson, screenprinter; Judith MacKenzie, spinner, dyer, weaver). There are no patterns or projects or how-to lists, just 30 inspiring perspectives on living a creative life.

▼ **Vanishing Fleece: Adventures in American Wool**

By Clara Parkes
Abrams Press; \$23
ISBN 978-1-4197-3531-8

When you're the author of *The Knitter's Book of Wool*, you know a thing or two about how fiber gets



from sheep to skein—and here, Parkes meets up with the people who work tirelessly to keep the traditions and industry of wool

making alive. So, while *Vanishing Fleece* is a read about all things wool, it's also a tour from Parkes's home in Maine across the country to Wisconsin. Her profiles of the shepherds and shearers that produce large, small, and specialty fleeces, as well as the dyers and mill workers and the communities that support them, prompt a renewed appreciation for the yarn that ends up on our needles. An ultimate knitterly indulgence? Listening to *Vanishing Fleece* on audiobook while you relax into your own favorite yarn project.

▼ **The Weaving Explorer: Ingenious Techniques, Accessible Tools & Creative Projects With Yarn, Paper, Wire & More**

By Deborah Jarchow and Gwen W. Steege
Storey Publishing; \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-63586-028-3

The over-and-under rhythm of weaving is ancient and familiar to most fiber-art lovers. If you've always wanted to join the world of



warp and weft but feared the startup costs (or even just the space a traditional loom can eat up), these 30 projects offer

innovative, low-barrier ways for new weavers to get started. The materials are not restricted to strands of wool—fabric, paper, and even wire transform into nontraditional floss-threaded notecards,

woven-paper Swedish stars, necklaces, and wire-loop freeform bowls. And for many of the projects, the only tool needed is an inexpensive handheld loom, a simple homemade loom, or no loom at all. The authors even use household items such as combs and extendable back scratchers as effective if unorthodox grids for setting warp threads for multicolor striped belts. How-to photos throughout plus a detailed glossary of techniques make these projects accessible to all levels. Just for fun: The award for smallest loom goes to...the plastic rings used to create spoked Dorset buttons (a perfect finishing detail for that just-off-the-needles cardigan).

▼ **We Are Knitters: Knitspiration to Take Anywhere and Everywhere**

By Alberto Bravo and Pepita Marin
Abrams; \$24.99
ISBN 978-1-4197-3612-4

Staying true to the chunky-knit style they debuted in 2011, the team at We Are Knitters serves up 15 new projects targeted at begin-



ners, with gauges from 1½ to 4½ stitches per inch. Bravo and Marin tell the We Are Knitters ori-

gin story—which then, as now, is dedicated to converting non-knitters into new knitters by offering contemporary and simple patterns and project kits. With this collection, We Are Knitters has expanded its skill-level ratings to give beginners an easy progression to their next project, and experienced stitchers stylish knits that work up fast. With a global focus, the collection borrows inspiration from cities including New York, Paris, Madrid, and Marrakech—and provides a mini tour guide of sorts, such as the best places to knit in public should you travel there with needles in hand. If you've never knit a stitch before, the how-to section (all photographed on big

needles with We Are Knitters' namesake "big" yarn) starts with the knit stitch and the purl. Most of the designs have no shaping, so the knitting is easy and the sewing together is, too, with line drawings that show you how all the pieces join together.

▼ **Crochet for Play: 80 Toys for Make-Believe**

By Sarah Pawlowski
Stackpole Books; \$22.95
ISBN 978-0-8117-3841-5

Know a little one who loves to play all-grown-up? Indulge that adorable make-believe stage by stitching up



the tools of some of the trades they may be conjuring—doctor, gardener,

police officer, painter, carpenter, salon owner, among others. Items such as a paint roller and brush, a hair dryer, a stethoscope, scissors, seed packets, and grown vegetables are just a few of the 80 patterns (which could double as cute gift-toppers for your favorite actual grown-up too).

An illustrated how-to section begins with the very first slipknot, then moves through single- and double-crochet and trebles, raised stitches, and changing colors. If you know those foundations of crochet but have been stuck stitching only rectangles, each project includes an intro note to help you visualize how the construction will progress; that, along with increasing/decreasing and written row/round by row/round instructions, will turn those rectangles into crocheted shapes with ease.

▼ **Knit Shawls & Wraps in 1 Week: 30 Quick Patterns to Keep You Cozy in Style**

By Marie Greene
Page Street Publishing; \$21.99
ISBN 978-1-62414-861-3

As with her book of seamless sweater patterns, Greene talks about these shawls and wraps the way one might list the special qualities of a

BFF. She introduces each design with the goal she had in mind at the sketch stage—the lightweight



shawls intended more for fashion than warmth, the heavier or larger wraps for just the op-

posite, as well as how each would function in the wearer's wardrobe. The organization of 30 patterns by the four seasons supports that logic. But the main theme is time: one week, to be exact. Greene lays out the stitching timeline for each design, sometimes encouraging knitting by yards per day, and always pointing out where in the work to slow down and savor the process. The collection spans small shawls to rectangular wraps to larger capelets, each a wearable contemporary design, not an overly frilly or ruffy one in the bunch.

▼ **The Knit Vibe: A Knitter's Guide to Creativity, Community, and Well-Being for Mind, Body, and Soul**

By Vickie Howell
Abrams; \$29.99
ISBN 978-1-4197-3279-9

With the same message conveyed in her online series, *The Knit Show*, in *The Knit Vibe*, Vickie Howell reminds makers how knitting (or



whichever medium we choose to express our creative selves) can enhance daily life.

Her unlikely mix of topics—basic maker fare like designer profiles and how-tos aside more peripheral subjects like wellness, nutrition, and yoga (even using a twisted skein as a prop)—raises awareness of the holistic aspects of creative pursuits. There are 16 quick knitting projects and eight crochet, including gifts and home décor patterns that certainly serve a practical purpose, but the chapters on intention and community enhance the stitch-by-stitch joy

that all makers know. While there is a photo-illustrated how-to section titled "Knowledge," some of the techniques are a notch above basic.

▼ **Plus Size Knits: 25 Knitting Patterns for Sweaters & Accessories**

By Phildar
Fox Chapel Publishing; \$21.99
ISBN 978-1-4971-0053-4



Anyone who has ever knit a sweater larger than the sample size knows that just because your bust measurement needs a few more inches doesn't mean your sleeve length, armhole and shoul-

der line need that same increment, too. These 25 patterns for sweaters and accessories are not merely upsized-math versions of the smaller pattern; they are designs inspired by the garment shapes, styles, and stitch patterns that specifically flatter plus-size bodies. The projects progress in difficulty from beginner to advanced and include a one-piece square pullover, a fringed scarf, a wavy shrug (the cover star), and an open-work cropped pullover. There is no how-to information, so beginners should know how to cast on and execute a knit and purl. Most knitters know that no two bodies—of any size—are alike, so a bit of math adjustment might be required, but these patterns start plus sizes off much closer to a best-fit knit.

■ **TREND WATCH**

Here's what was selling in the last week of November 2019:



Amazon Knitting List (print publications)

- *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Knitting Book (revised edition)*, by the editors of *Vogue Knitting* (Sixth&Spring Books)
- *Harry Potter: Knitting Magic: The Official Harry Potter Knitting Pattern Book*, by Tanis Gray (Insight Editions)
- *Selbu Mittens*, by Anne Bardsgard (Trafalgar)
- *Knit Shawls & Wraps in 1 Week*,

by Marie Greene (Page Street Publishing)

- *The Knit Vibe*, by Vickie Howell (Abrams)
- *Vanishing Fleece*, by Clara Parkes (Abrams)
- *Vogue Knitting: The Ultimate Quick Reference*, by the editors of *Vogue Knitting* (Sixth&Spring Books)

Amazon Crochet List (print publications)

- *Modern Crochet*, by DeBrosse (Paige Tate & Co.)
- *Crochet Cute Critters*, by Sarah Zimmerman (Rockridge Press)
- *A to Z of Crochet* (Martingale)
- *Whimsical Stitches*, by Lauren Espy (Paige Tate & Co.)
- *Unicorns, Dragons and More Fantasy Amigurumi* (Meteoor Books)

Barnes & Noble Crafts & Hobbies List (print publications)

- *Crochet Every Way Stitch Dictionary*, by Dora Ohrenstein (Abrams)
- *To Knit or Not to Knit: Helpful and Humorous Hints for the Passionate Knitter*, by Elvira Woodruff (Skyhorse)
- *A Life in Stitches: Knitting My Way Through Love, Loss, and Laughter*, by Rachael Herron (Chronicle Books)

A New Partnership

This year, Creativation (January 16–20, 2020, in Phoenix, Arizona) is expanding its exhibition space to welcome AFCI partner organizations such as TNNA. AFCI spoke with Susan Lane, TNNA's executive director, to gain insight on how the partner organization plans to take advantage of this opportunity to have its own space on the show floor.

AFCI: What was the reaction upon learning that TNNA would have its own exhibit space at Creativation?

SL: As the executive director of SmithBucklin, I work very closely with Peter Finn, the executive director of AFCI, and I was thrilled. I thought it came at a really good time for TNNA because of our winter market and our overall financial situation. This is a great opportunity for our members to attend at a great rate. They've been asking for a show floor space, so it gave them that opportunity at a nice price in addition to a wide variety of education opportunities. It's also in a warm location, which is a plus.

AFCI: How long had this opportunity been in

conversation prior to getting the green light?

SL: I think the conversation started in 2014, prior to TNNA joining SmithBucklin. We talked again in 2016. With TNNA coming to SmithBucklin, the relationship got stronger—it was just the right partnership at the right time.

AFCI: What is the goal/importance of the TNNA Pavilion at Creativation?

SL: It will give our members a new opportunity and a new space. We get to interact and be part of a bigger show. A lot of our board members will be volunteering to help with the show. We'll have a spot where attendees can ask our board members questions. We're also planning to do some sort of member get-together offsite so our members can connect. Additionally, we might do a few roundtable discussions, where our retailers can meet and talk about the show. We're hoping to have some of our board members walk the floor with key AFCI members and really start to build that relationship.

AFCI: How will TNNA use this chance to introduce a new layer of innovation to the event?

SL: I think the innovation that we're bringing involves showcasing different products on the floor. I know there has been some needle-point and larger yarn stores there, but these are smaller business-to-business owners that are different than a bigger company. What we're trying to do is have retailers not just focus on one type of product, and through this experience learn they can offer something else. TNNA is very specifically yarn and needle, so we're looking to expand and spark outside interest.

AFCI: How does TNNA's presence benefit creative industries as a whole?

SL: In our strategic plan, we reference that we want to be part of the craft ecosystem and innovation space. We're all doing crafts, so this is a nice way for everyone to be together at one time and truly show everyone [who] attends that we're cultivating that. I know AFCI wants to get a craft in every person's home, and our goal is to spread awareness, so Creativation is truly a perfect place to do that.

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.



www.knitterspride.com



Holiday Gift Set

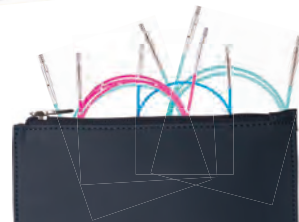
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Knitter's Pride SmartStix have 1" markings on the needles and cords for quick measuring on the go!

Flaunt this uber-chic bag as a clutch, cross body bag, shoulder bag, as a go to knitting case.... all in one!



Yarn Popularity Growth Gets Press

Over the past year, the Craft Yarn Council has implemented campaigns to showcase the wide range of both the people who participate in yarn crafts and the crafts themselves. Last fall's Humans That Yarn campaign, with more than 15 videos of six "yarnists" discussing how yarn is woven into their lives, was a huge success. In 2019, CYC garnered dozens of press hits around the country.

In April, *AARP Magazine's* "How to Get Started Knitting" called knitting "the rage of the decade." The article featured research CYC has done over the years, including on the intersection between yarn crafts and self-care prepared for the Stitch Away Stress campaign.

And in May, the *Wall Street Journal* published "In Mindful Knitting, It's the Journey, Not the Scarf," which talked about how for many people learning to knit or crochet, the benefits received are from the act of knitting itself, not the end product. This followed an article *WSJ* published in 2018 about the growing trend of young people learning these crafts.

Perhaps the most important press hit for CYC in 2019 was the Associated Press piece, "Yarn Bombers' Use Craft to Make a Statement," which came out in June. Featuring several people who explain why they use yarn bombing to express their feelings about vital issues, the article ran in more than 35 publications around the United States and the world.

Last but not least, *Washington's Top News* ran a story about the importance of social media for today's fiber artists. "Hip to Knit: How Social Media Is Expanding the Knitting Community" talked about how the online knitting community has experienced increased calls for diversity and inclusion and the role social media plays in showcasing the universality of yarn crafts.

What do all of these articles have in common? They show that yarn crafts are not dying in today's online, hyper-connected society. If anything, the availability of tools to learn a yarn craft and the plethora of inspiration from yarn influencers and everyday people alike has caused a rise of interest, especially among young people.

Here are tips for getting press in your own city, from CYC's public relations coordinator Sarah Guenther-Moore:

- Introduce yourself to local reporters and journalists and let them know that you are a great person to talk to should they ever write an article about yarn crafts.
 - Put out a call for local artists to exhibit in your shop, host an artist talk, and invite reporters.
 - Host a panel of fiber artists to discuss the benefits they receive from their craft and how they use social media to showcase their work.
 - Host a hat/mitten drive and invite community and local news stations to cover the initiative.
 - When inviting media to cover a story, relate it to current news articles and research showing a growing trend in the popularity of yarn crafts.
- To get an idea of what might pique a reporter's interest, visit craftyarncouncil.presskithero.com to view sample press releases and articles.

Stay tuned to CYC's website, Facebook, and Instagram to see the exciting things we have in store for 2020!

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

COCOKNITS

THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED KNIT
PATTERNS AND CRAFT TOOLS





Lorna's Laces
est. 1987

the past,
present,
and future
of yarn.

lornaslaces.net

TNNA

BY HEATHER ZOPPETTI,
PRESIDENT ELECT

TNNA
THE NATIONAL NEEDLEARTS ASSOCIATION

Members, Welcome

With the passing of the new bylaws at TNNA, all members are now voting members. But what does that mean? Before this change, only wholesale members of the organization were allowed to vote. That meant only a small subset of the membership was able to enact policy changes and elect new board members. They were also the only members allowed to sit on the board. In these two ways, wholesale members were the only fully empowered members.

Now any member conducting business in the fiber-arts industry can vote and hold a seat on the board. What's beautiful about this development is, first, that the wholesalers voted for this change. (They were the only members who *could* vote on it.) And second, the changing of the language opens the doors for all kinds of membership, breaking down the silos of wholesaler, retailer, designer, etc.

Gone are the days when we were made to feel like we needed to fit neatly into a single category. I have heard many times that people didn't feel that TNNA was the place for them because they didn't fit into one category.

The next step will be for the membership and other committees to figure out how the details are going to work. Are you interested in joining a committee? We are always looking for committee volunteers. TNNA is an organization for the people, by the people. We have formal calls for committees throughout the year. If you are motivated and passionate for the organization and for making change, please reach out; your skills are needed.

Next, join us at Creativation in Phoenix, Arizona, January 16–20, 2020. This is a new experience and partnership, and we are excited for the opportunity to have a pavilion on the floor at this event, where our TNNA exhibitors will showcase their newest products and services. As an attendee you will be able to shop with our exhibitors as usual, but you will also have access to the full Creativation floor and classes with your TNNA membership. We hope to see you there. Stop by the TNNA booth to chat, hang out, or ask questions. Can't make it to Phoenix? We return to Cleveland May 27–31, 2020, for the summer trade show.

I know it seems far away, but Local Yarn Store Day is just a few months away, on April 25—now's the time to start planning if you haven't already. This year we are offering three 2020-exclusive patterns for the event, which we think will help drive even more excitement to local brick-and-mortar shops.

The three patterns were submitted by TNNA designers and voted on via a panel of judges. Our winning designers are: for Crochet Design, Rosann Fleischauer, of First Byte Designs; for Gender Neutral Design, Jill Wolcott, of Jill Wolcott Knits; for Knit Design, Meghan Jones, of Little NutMeg Productions. These patterns are perfect for making into kits and will be available for purchase directly from our website. We have a feeling that wholesalers may be (or perhaps should be) making kits with these in mind as well. They will be on display at our booth in the TNNA pavilion at Creativation if you want a sneak peek. We can't wait to share them with you, and we just know you'll be as smitten with them as we are.

TNNA 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.

The Power of Rewards

BY CLAIRE LUI

Giving back to your most loyal customers.

Anyone who has ever added that unnecessary \$5 item to their online shopping cart for free shipping or saved up supermarket stamps for free dishes knows the lure of customer loyalty programs. The basic premise for these programs is the same: Spend a certain amount of money and you'll receive a reward, usually a discount on your next purchase. Rewards programs build customer loyalty as well as help differentiate your yarn store from competitors. The programs can also be a good source of customer information and spending data to help refine your inventory and marketing plans.

Paper versus digital

Some yarn stores give out paper loyalty cards that are punched or stamped, while others use electronic systems to keep track of rewards programs. Both systems have pros and cons—what works for one store may not be right for another.

keep them here," says McCook, but if they want to remain anonymous (as the cards are filed by name), they can hold on to their own.

For Maridee Dangcil, owner of Yarnover Truck, a yarn-store truck that drives around Southern California, all points for her Road Crew Rewards Program are stored on the computer. Dangcil uses Thirdshelf, a customer loyalty program that works as an extension of her point-of-sale system, Lightspeed. As Road Crew members, customers earn one point for every dollar spent and a \$10 reward after 200 points, \$25 after 350 points, or \$50 after 500 points. Dangcil prefers the electronic system, saying, "I like it because I can monitor it and I have more control over it."

At Adventures in Knitting, in Harwich, Massachusetts, owner Cathie Hammatt used punch cards for seven years but decided to switch to electronic tracking in September 2019. With punch cards, customers had earned one point per dollar, but under the new electronic system, every

causing some unexpected economic consequences, with customers having earned rewards with returned yarn. The new system—Hammatt uses Square's own loyalty program—automatically removes the points from the customer's reward account when yarn is returned.

Electronic systems generally incur a monthly fee for the shop based on customer volume—Thirdshelf charges \$7 per month for every 250 customers and Square starts at \$45 per month for the first 500 customers. However, the electronic systems also include automated customer data tracking that may make the cost worthwhile.

Building a sense of community

Yarn store owners start and maintain loyalty programs to build a sense of community among their customers. In a 2016 survey, Forrester Research found that customers who belong to a loyalty program are more likely to promote the business to others, describe themselves as loyal customers, rate their customer experience higher, and spend, on average, about \$42.33 more over a three-month period than nonmembers.

This data matches with the feedback LYSO get from their customers—McCook laughs and says that customers have been known to call from home after a visit to double-check that their Yarn-a-holics card has been stamped.

Most stores offer a card or the ability to sign up for the program whenever a customer buys from the shop. For stores that may have many one-time shoppers, membership rates may be lower. At Lofty Lou's in Placerville, California, a common rest stop for visitors driving to Lake Tahoe, Denise Maudru, one of the 25 collective owners of the store, says that although 99 percent of local customers want the card, many tourists turn it down, as they don't plan to return.

Dangcil of the Yarnover Truck verbally offers the opportunity to sign up for Road Crew only on the customer's second visit, using the program to reward customers who make the effort to seek out the truck in its different locations. Due to the roving nature of her business, she finds some customers might only stop by once.

Rewards programs are popular for a reason: For a relatively low cost, stores increase customer loyalty, increase customer spending, and increase customer engagement. These are rewards for both the store owner and the customer.

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Claire Lui is a writer and knitter living in Queens.

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- **Embrace the pun-tastic possibilities:** Many stores give their program cute names: Yarn Love's Skein Squad, Jimmy Beans' Jimmy Beans Bucks, The Loopy Ewe's Loopy Groupies.
 - **Research electronic options:** Some point-of-sale systems, including QuickBooks and Square, have a built-in capacity to track rewards. Others may require buying an add-on, such as Thirdshelf or Loyal2 for Lightspeed or Smile.io or Loyalty Lion for Shopify. If you don't use an electronic point-of-sale system, you may prefer to use a paper punch or stamp card for a loyalty program, but you'll be missing the chance to capture customer data.
 - **Be clear about restrictions on earning and spending:** At Mountain Knits & Pearls in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, owner Joanne Deardorff lets customers earn and spend rewards on any yarn, notions, or pattern, including sale yarn. "It's about the happiness of the customer for me," she said. She is an exception—most stores don't allow rewards on sale yarn (as a discount is baked into the sale price). Most stores also prohibit earning or spending rewards on classes. Make your policies clear up front to your customers.
 - **Standardize the reward structure:** Different stores have different structures, but most offer a one-time reward equivalent to a discount of about 5 to 10 percent of the total spent—or about \$5 to \$10 in rewards for every \$100 spent.
 - **Use customer data wisely:** Stores can not only track customer spending with the email addresses used to sign up for rewards programs but also use the data for newsletters and other exclusive promotions.
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At Fiber Factory in Mesa, Arizona, co-owner Terri McCook has a Yarn-a-holics Anonymous 12-Stamp Rewards Program. For every visit where a customer spends \$25 or more, they get a stamp; after 12 stamps, the card can be turned in for \$25 off their next purchase. The unusual twist here is that Fiber Factory will store customers' cards, so people don't have to worry about losing them. "Seventy-five percent of our customers

\$2 spent equals one point, with 50 points (or \$100) earning a \$5 discount on the next purchase.

Part of the reason for the switch was that sometimes customers would buy a lot of yarn, earning many points, but then for different reasons (miscalculating yardage, changing projects), would end up returning most or all of the original purchase. "It just seemed tacky to ask for their punch card back," says Hammatt, but it ended up

Check-Up Time

Keep your business healthy with these eight tips.

People need yearly physicals to keep them in tip-top shape—and so does your business. The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to diagnose small issues you can treat before they get bigger. While you're at it, perform some preventative medicine to stave off potential problems that you don't want your business to get.

Measure your height

Assessing growth is an important way to measure overall health and performance. Has your business grown in the past year, or has it shrunk? If you've expanded your customer base, hired new staff to keep up with orders, and/or seen sales rise, then you're likely on the right track. Determine what strategies helped you get this far and think about ways to build on that growth.

If you haven't seen healthy growth, it's time to figure out why. Are sales stagnant? Is a particular product or product line floundering? How can you reach new customers? Maybe you need to add products (if customers say they have enough yarn, how about bags or artisanal soaps and lotions to tempt them?). Or maybe you need some new samples or a new class to spark fresh interest.

Be honest about your weight

Nobody likes to get on the doctor's scale, but sometimes it's a hard truth you must face. Consider whether aspects of your business are weighing you down. Do you have too much inventory? Convert yarn in storage to cash in your bank account by doing promotions, discounts, or a marketing push (knit-along, anyone?). Are you overstaffed? Maybe you don't need to replace a departing employee, at least not now.

Think about the appearance of your shop, too. Would clearing out some displays or rearranging products help make your shop feel more open and inviting? Think about other ways that you can implement a less-is-more attitude.

Vaccinate

Inoculate your business against unpleasant tax surprises by planning ahead. No doubt 2018 brought significant changes in the form of tax reform (which you experienced when you submitted last year's tax return). Now's a good time to see what you can do to respond to or even benefit from some of those changes.

Businesses with larger income: Consider if you should switch from a pass-through entity (commonly seen as a "d/b/a") to a corporation or

LLC—you may end up with lowered corporate tax rates. Business travel and entertainment deductions, however, were sharply cut across the board. Take this into account when setting up your calendar for the year. The 2018 legislation is complex, so it's a good idea to consult with a qualified tax professional for solutions tailored to your unique situation.

Review your insurance

Health insurance plans change every year; other types of insurance may, too. Review which specific types of coverage your business has, as well as monthly or annual cost, coverage limits, and deductible amounts. You may be able to shop around with other agents or insurers and find equivalent coverage for less. You may also discover that you need to add coverage. Better to find out now than when disaster strikes.

Join a support group

Support groups exist for those with many kinds of health problems. Finding others who are in the same place you are can help business owners, too. Trade associations like TNNA or the Craft Industry Alliance can help you network with others in the industry and access valuable information and strategies about running a craft-related business.

Online groups are another good way to bounce ideas off industry peers and get advice. You don't have to join a formal group or message board to reap the benefits of collaboration; making sure you have a circle of friends in the industry and communicating with them regularly can provide you with the same kinds of connection, information, and support. You may find new approaches to old problems—or at least some friends to commiserate with.

Keep records of everything

Just as it's wise to keep organized records of your health information, it's also important to save and organize your business records. If all you see are boxes of receipts, invoices, and other piles of paper, implement an organizational system now! Switching to software like Quicken is one way to go, but even if you don't plan to implement new software, at least try to manage your documents.

Set up file folders and print out important paperwork as you get it, then file them right away. Set aside a specific time once a week—say, an hour on Wednesdays—to go through the past week's documents. You will be glad that you did.

BY CAROL J. SULCOSKI

Safeguard your privacy

Since data privacy law is constantly evolving, your annual checkup should include a thorough look at how your business handles sensitive and private data. You've probably heard before that your business needs a privacy policy, a clear statement that discloses how your business collects and uses customer information. If you don't have one, get one fast: privacy laws require them. An effective policy can protect your business from liability. It should be accessible to website visitors.

Make sure your policy is compliant. At a minimum, it should provide notice of exactly what kind of data is collected on your site; describe what safeguards are used to protect that information; clearly explain a customer's options for opting in and out; provide access to customers so they can review information and correct it if necessary; and set out what a customer can do if they believe their information is not being handled properly. It should also disclose whether customer information is disclosed to third parties.

While you're thinking about privacy concerns, evaluate your website's security strengths. Start with access. Do you require customers to use unique passwords? Do you only give a user a limited number of incorrect tries to log in? Make sure you're using effective methods to protect information when it's being sent back and forth (SSL encryption is the industry standard). If you use third-party software, keep it up-to-date and install any security patches. A yearly review will help keep your information safe and your customers happy.

Remember that mental health is important, too

You've doubtless read articles about the importance of maintaining mental health and relaxation, so stop procrastinating and take care of yourself. If you are experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety or have other symptoms that alarm you, consult with a mental health professional to make sure you're doing okay.

If your anxiety and stress don't warrant a trip to a professional, prioritize self-care by taking breaks from the business, finding activities or hobbies that relax you, getting the proper rest, and engaging in exercise you enjoy doing. You can't take care of your business if you're not healthy yourself.

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

Holding the Bag

BY DARYL BROWER

Paper or plastic? For more and more towns, there's no longer a choice.

Upward of 400 million tons of plastic are produced each year, and of that, about 40 percent of it is single use. "Plastic bags are a huge portion of the waste that escapes into the environment and becomes pollution," says Randall Solomon, executive director of Sustainable Jersey, a nonprofit that provides tools, training, and financial incentives to support community environmental efforts in New Jersey. "Once in the environment they just build up, never biodegrade, and never go away." In an effort to keep that plastic from getting into the waste stream in the first place, more than 400 cities and states have banned or taxed single-use plastic bags since 2014.

Change is good?

Justine Malone, owner of Cast Away Yarn Shop in Santa Rosa, California, found the mandate to drop plastic bags and use only those that comply with specific materials standards was an easy one. "I really try to avoid plastic and have for more than 20 years," Malone explains. Cast Away's shopping bags—handled recyclable Kraft paper hand-stamped with the shop logo—already met the requirements; the only adjustment she had to make was instituting a ten-cent charge for supplying the bag to customers. Designed to help retailers offset the cost of changing bag types, the fee is mandatory for all businesses in Santa Rosa.

There were a few complaints from customers, but Malone says those were easily addressed. "We explain that it's mandatory and that we do believe it is helping the environment, and they seem to be fine with it." The fee has incentivized customers to bring their own bags. "It was kind of amazing," Malone says. "That ten cents makes [customers] rethink—within only a month or two, people across our county were remembering to bring their own bags."

For retailers like Bonnie Burton of Colorful Stitches in Lenox, Massachusetts, where a bag ban went into effect in 2016, the switch to paper from their handled plastic bags was a bit more burdensome. "Our switch resulted in per-bag cost increases of 767 percent," says Burton. "Turnaround time from placement of order to shipping increased as well." The Lenox bylaw does not require retailers to charge for bags; the decision is left up to the individual retailer. Burton chose not to impose a fee. "We view the minimal bag charge required by some

retailers (like grocery stores) as an insult to customers who have just spent their time and money in making a personal project selection from us," she says. "So we include the bag cost as part of our overall cost structure."

While there is often pushback in areas where bag bans are instituted, Solomon says it tends to be short-lived. "Once the bans are in effect, life goes on and people forget what the fuss was about. The biggest fear is loss of business due to a perceived inconvenience, but I haven't seen any data, or heard any credible anecdotes, that support this fear," he says.

In Lenox, the lack of a mandatory fee means retailers are free to keep handing out compliant bags. And since customers get a bag at no charge, there's been little pushback. "It was not a bag ban after all, but a material change," says Burton. "Some customers in the early days were a bit miffed that they couldn't see through the bags any longer"—many were reusing the plastic totes as project bags—"but we don't hear that anymore. Some carry their own knitting totes into the store and prefer to stick their new purchase right in their tote."

Getting a handle on the details

Ideally, municipalities that institute bag bans will provide support and allow input from businesses. "Most retailers have lots of very practical questions about how to implement local ordinances—how to collect fees, what to do for people with physical disabilities, how to find environmentally conscious substitutes," says Solomon.

Malone says Santa Rosa retailers were given a six-month notice about the plastics ban but not much in the way of support. "They just told us so we could work through bag stock," she says. Other towns have provided more help. In Highland Park, New Jersey, Solomon's hometown, an education campaign and support for merchants was part of the process. Retailers were given lists of suppliers who could provide compliant reusable and recyclable paper bags, as well as flyers explaining the reasoning behind the bag ban and fees and a FAQ for store employees with recommended answers to customer questions. Multiple meetings were held that allowed input from both merchants and community members.

Burton's merchant association did not discuss the ban until after it was in place. She did take part in an effort to revise a section of the bylaw

that required paper shopping bags to have information about recycling, post-consumer content percentages, and country of manufacture to be printed on the bottom. It was a reactive rather than proactive approach. "The inventory at bag companies was already manufactured for retail use without these specific disclaimers," Burton explains. "It rendered current inventory unusable—and some manufacturers don't print on their bags at all." A letter-writing campaign from merchants effected a compromise—retailers can now submit a letter from the manufacturer stating that the bags meet requirements.

Beyond bags

Some towns go a step beyond banning bags. That's the case in Lenox and several surrounding towns. "The ordinance does not allow for any merchandise to leave the store in plastic—even those products that are packaged by the vendor," says Burton. If a customer purchases a full bag of yarn, Burton has to remove it from the plastic. It's an inconvenience and somewhat silly since the plastic the yarn came in will now head directly into the waste stream rather than protect the purchase for a bit longer. Still, it's a start. Until no manufacturers use plastic packaging, change will be happening at the point of purchase—and retailers are the ones who will be making it work.

Prepare for a bag ban

Attend and advocate. Make sure your local merchants' organization is connecting with council members about retailers' needs and concerns. Make time to attend council meetings and offer feedback.

Start sourcing. Swapping bag suppliers (or even just changing bag types) can take time. Do your research now so you're ready for change.

Educate. Post flyers explaining the bag ban and make sure your staff knows how to answer customer questions.

Offer alternatives. Stock reusable totes (branded with your logo!) to sell or give away with a set purchase amount.

Daryl Brower is a freelance writer based in New Jersey. Her collection of reusable bags is massive, and most of the time she remembers to take them with her.

RETAIL PROFILE

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

Great Yarns Everett, Washington



among a collection of commercial buildings in Everett, a small town about 45 minutes north of Seattle near Possession Sound.

While doing her initial research and searching for a retail space, Jones was at a shop across the street and saw a "For Rent" sign on the home. "I was able to rent the upper level," she says. "After 10 years, I was able to purchase the main store building and the accompanying back building."

The main building houses five rooms of yarns, arranged by yarn weight. The annex space holds closeout yarns, models, and needles, and it's where Jones and her team keep back stock, fulfill shipping, and host a teaching studio. Over the years Jones has remodeled the interior, "literally moving walls and opening up doorways,"

she says. "We are the only freestanding original building in the area."

Great Yarns, so named because that's what Jones intended to sell when she conceived of the idea, has always been full service, focusing on the entire process of creating a project. Jones says her team is available to assist customers at any stage of their work—"from dropped stitches to custom dyeing your yarn to fit your needs."

She adds: "We will teach you, do finishing and repair, steam, and block. And we even offer custom knitting and crochet." The courses offered in-store cover everything from beginner knitting projects to a Ravelry 101 class, in which lessons include managing stashes and posting projects on the social network. Group and private classes are taught by the store's staff. The

"I opened Great Yarns in September 1984. I was a new knitter, and the more I learned and the more I knit, I grew weary of always having to drive out of the area for quality yarn," says Fontelle Jones of her yarn shop in Everett, Washington. "I had not been in the yarn industry when I opened the shop. If you had asked me 35 years ago if I would still be doing this, I probably would have said no. But here I am still enjoying every day."

It's quite a feat, opening a store without prior experience in the industry, and then learning and excelling so strongly that success has lasted far past a quarter of a century. Great Yarns isn't just a staple in Jones's neighborhood but a recognizable name in the industry. "I have been in business so long that Jim Bryson, owner of Bryson Distributing, and Bob Dunbabin, founder of Cascade Yarns, were my original sales reps!" she says.

As Great Yarns' customer base has grown, so too has the shop's retail footprint, in a welcoming, homey Craftsman house that sits



Last September, Fontelle Jones (seated) celebrated 35 years of building community and a strong customer base at Great Yarns. Below, knitters and crocheters pose at the shop with teddy bears they outfit to comfort hospice children every year.

shop's Wednesday evening Stitch Night is also perpetually popular.

"We update our offerings seasonally, but we also are not shy about throwing something new in midseason. Often our classes are driven by new yarn or projects and techniques," says Jones.

Yarns from cotton to cashmere, patterns, kits, and tools fill the retail space, and Jones says the main goal of Great Yarns is to appeal to the knitter or crocheter who is looking for quality yarn. Lines in stock include Cascade Yarns, TOFT, Maggie Knits, and Freia Fine Handpaints.

"We are always on the hunt for new and innovative yarns and tools," Jones says. "Our supplies are both domestic and imported—we have well-known yarn as well as local-to-us companies. We recently expanded our cashmere offerings, both 100 percent cashmere and cashmere blends from fingering to bulky. We've also seen a positive response to new recycled cashmere yarns."

Jones has fostered and grown her store's customer base through a variety of means, attending retail yarn shows across the country, building communities on social media—namely Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram—and establishing an online shop. Along with local knitters, she participates in community events.

"Great Yarns has always been deeply committed to hospice care in our community," she explains. "Every year our knitters and our crocheters 'dress' bears for hospice children.



Over the years, we've donated more than 2,000 bears to Camp Erin. This is an example of our customers sharing their skills and love with grieving children."

Jones also takes on large-scale initiatives like knitting cruises. "We have sponsored both a West Coast and a New England knitting cruise, where we partnered with Barry Klein of Trendsetter Yarns," she says. "Both cruises were a great success."

She has another in the works to commemorate Great Yarns' 35 years of operation. "We will be partnering with Laura Bryant and Prism Yarns for a land-and-cruise event in April 2020," Jones explains. "Prism Yarns and Great

Yarns started at about the same time, and we have enjoyed 35 years of friendship and a business relationship."

The five-night Western Caribbean cruise has the option to add pre-boarding events, such as a cocktail party, a class with Prism's Laura Bryant, and a tour and shopping experience in Prism's warehouse.

Jones acknowledges the milestone achievement of being in business so long. "Great Yarns has evolved from a small local yarn shop to a recognizable name in the industry," she says. "We have grown, but we have stayed strong in our commitment to customer service and quality products."



Great Yarns

4023 Rucker Ave., Everett, WA 98201
(425) 252-8155; toll-free (888) 320-6802
www.greatyarns.com

Years in business: 35

Square footage: 1,350 square feet (main house);
1,400 square feet including annex

Staff: 10 (five in house; five support staff)

Hours: Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–6 p.m.;
Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

**QUICK
GLANCE**

COMPANY PROFILE

Knitter's Pride

BY MARYAM SIDDIQI

All artists develop a relationship with their tools—a fondness for a particular brush, say, or the perfect bench for their potter's wheel. And so it is with knitters and their needles or crocheters and their hooks. It's rather fitting, then, that Knitter's Pride was born from a collaboration with some German companies that manufacture artists' materials and products.

"As an extension to the hobby and craft business, we launched the knitting-needle business in 2006 under the brand KnitPro, which is very well known in Europe and other countries," says Shirish Jain, vice president of KnitPro International. Knitter's Pride was born in 2011 to serve the U.S. and Canadian markets.

"Within a short span of time we have become the world's largest manufacturer of handknitting needles, crochet hooks, and related accessories," says Jain. "We are equipped with the most modern manufacturing technology, and we currently sell close to 2 million needles and crochet hooks every month, largely targeted toward the premium end of the market."

Knitter's Pride products are made in the company's own manufacturing facility, in Jaipur, India, southwest of New Delhi. One of the qualities that sets the company apart from the competition is the attention to detail throughout the production cycle. Each needle passes through 40 individual processes—both automatic and manual—before it assumes its final shape.

"Human labor is available in abundance in India, being such a highly populous country. In order to provide employment to the underprivileged people and mainly the women workforce, we prefer manual operations wherever possible," says Jain.

Knitter's Pride and KnitPro products are distributed and sold to more than 65 countries. But it's the North American market that keeps the product design team on its toes. "The U.S. and Canadian market is more innovative and hungry for glamorous and interesting products," Jain says. "This market has inspired us

to create a lot of creative products, such as our popular Row Counter Rings, Knit Blockers, and SmartStix."

SmartStix, for instance, are needles and a ruler in one—the needles alternate color every inch so that knitters can quickly measure on the go. The company's Row Counter Ring fits on a knitter's finger as a ring would and is easily adjusted as rows are completed.

The Knitter's Pride product line is expansive, including several kinds of knitting needles composed of various materials—brass to birchwood, bamboo to carbon fiber—as well as crochet hooks, blocking tools, gauges, pattern holders, and more.

"We are very proud of our foundation ranges, such as Dreamz, Zing, Ginger, and SmartStix, which are instantly recognizable in the market as Knitter's Pride products and give consumers the reassurance of a quality product designed to meet their needs," Jain says. "It's the quality, colors, and ease of identifying each size by color that knitters really appreciate." The color scheme of Knitter's Pride needles is not only practical, helping knitters to keep their tools organized, but provides a function for visually impaired knitters.

Product design and development is overseen by a panel of experts located in Germany, the U.S., and some Scandinavian countries, as well as in-house designers. "Our team strives to bring inspirational and aspirational products to a global market each year, providing them with new and interesting ranges to make crafting more pleasurable and fun," says Jain.

Through its network of five U.S.-based distributors, Knitter's Pride lines are available at retailers in 48 states and Puerto Rico. "We make it a point to meet all our distributors personally once a year," Jain says, "and this mostly happens at the annual trade shows. They are the only connection between us and the consumer, so their feedback is of great importance to us."





That said, the company is active on social media, engaging with fans of the brand via video content, contests, craft projects, and influencer campaigns for product reviews. "It is very important for us to keep our eyes and ears open to what the community has to say, and we are happy to answer questions and help our fans find what they need, whether it's the perfect knitting needle or crochet hook for their next project, locating their nearest authorized retailer, or helping with a customer service issue," Jain says. "It is an open platform for everyone, and the feedback we receive is very useful in upgrading our products and services."

Just as the company is fostering its online community, it's extremely active in its home community in Jaipur. KnitPro prides itself on its corporate social responsibility initiatives, Jain explains.

"First and foremost is our commitment to provide employment opportunities to each and every woman who approaches us for a job. This is a small contribution that we make to the cause

of female empowerment here in India, especially in view of the fact that our factory in Jaipur is surrounded by villages where women in Rajasthan have traditionally been denied the opportunity to earn a livelihood due to social factors and age-old traditions," he says. "Our goal is to help these women gain a respectable stature within their families and the society at large." Roughly 350 women work in the KnitPro factories in Jaipur and Noida.

The company also runs a school in the village of Rampur Bangar, in a rural area near Noida, to provide free education to approximately 900 local students.

"Previously, these children spent their time helping their family in the agriculture fields or in the home. Now, these children are offered a chance for a formal education, and many of the children who have succeeded in their studies in the last few years have gone on to study in colleges or taken up vocational training," Jain says with pride. "Some of them have even found work at KnitPro factories."



PRIDE AND JOY Clockwise from top right: Knitter's Pride workers gather at the factory in Jaipur; a classroom at Apna School ("Our School"), where village children can study, funded by the company; Ginger crochet hooks, a Karbonz Deluxe interchangeable set, and Zing Emerald and SmartStix fixed circular needles; performers at the annual company gala; some of the work performed is highly manual; the factory floor in Jaipur.

Address: KnitPro International, Plot #28-29, Noida Special Economic Zone, Noida 201305 (U.P.), India
+91-120-4722000; knitterspride.com
Number of employees: 200, plus more than 700 shift workers
Fun fact: "Our annual gala is something that everyone looks forward to," says Jain; the event is organized by the company's workforce and is meant for the employees themselves. "It is a source of motivation for all of them as we award them for their outstanding contributions."

WHEN IS A HAT NOT JUST A HAT?



A look at how our stitches can speak louder than words.

By Leslie Petrovski

Six weeks after the October 2018 Shabbat morning shooting that left 11 dead and six wounded at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue, the small yarn shop nearby had received enough squares to make 60 afghans for the families of the stricken and devastated congregants.

Inspired by the heartbreaking loss of a customer's child, Yarns by Design had posted soon after the devastating event about the mother's hope to amass enough squares to make a blanket for the shul. Soon, knitted and crocheted blocks depicting Tree of Life motifs, stars of David, menorahs, hearts, and plain blocks poured into the shop—more than 1,000 in all.

On the surface, each square represented a gift of compassion to the three congregations that worship at Tree of Life. But this shooting wasn't a random act of terror. It was a targeted, anti-Semitic attack on Jews at worship and the support some congregants had shown immigrants. The blankets made in response, ostensible objects of comfort, were also messages of validation in the wake of a hate crime.

If the last year in the yarn crafting world has taught us anything, it's that a blanket isn't just a blanket.

HARD CONVERSATIONS

In early 2019, the social media makerspace exploded in a long-overdue conversation about racism and inclusion in the craft yarn industry. Over the course of weeks, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOCs) reported being insulted, ignored, and followed in yarn shops

and alienated by the lack of diversity displayed in magazines, in classes, and at shows.

Then in June, Ravelry banned public discussion of President Donald Trump, equating "support of President Trump, his administration or individual policies that harm marginalized groups" to "hate speech."

Ravelry's announcement sparked a media firestorm not only in the yarniverse but also in the mainstream media, where the needlearts suddenly became ground zero for questioning how social media platforms are defining and handling hate speech. As the summer wore on, Ravelry users both celebrated the policy and condemned it, marking their opinions with hashtags such as #standwithravelry, #ravelryexodus, and more. Some Ravelers decided to take their stashes elsewhere, condemning Ravelry's decision as antithetical to the First Amendment or opining that knitting was their "happy place" and shouldn't be political.

As Stephen Colbert put it on *The Late Show* after the Ravelry decision, "You're not just knitting a fabric that's too scratchy to wear on a cold day and too smelly to wear on a wet one, you're knitting the fabric of America."

Our crafts, our clothing, and even our food choices all say something about who we are. Ever since humans began using cloth to define personal, tribal, or state identities, making and displaying stuff has communicated power, ideas, values, religion, spirituality, belonging—or not belonging—all the ways we seek to express ourselves as human.

"Knitting changed my life," observes Taylor Payne, who learned to knit in the aftermath of the 2014 protests of Michael Brown's fatal shooting. Struggling with PTSD after being tear-gassed and shot with rubber bullets by police, Payne found "a measure of calm" when she knit. Collaborating with other Ferguson activists, Payne helped co-found the Yarn Mission, a knitting collective that teaches knitting and supports Black artists with the goal of Black liberation. Activism, she says, brought fiber into her life and helped her identify as an artist, working toward a society where "people can be financially free from capitalism and sustain themselves by the things they create."

TEXTILE HISTORY

It's tempting to think of craft and activism as a sea of pink hats on heads during the global women's marches. But history yields many more examples of decisions made in regard to craft production, who produced that craft, and craft used to disrupt or support the status quo.

Anthropological evidence suggests that weaving started sometime during the Upper Paleolithic period more than 20,000 years ago. The earliest evidence for knitting comes from colorwork cotton socks made in Egypt circa 1,000 CE. Crochet is thought to have evolved from Chinese needlework and was popularized in France as *tambouring*. While older textile histories don't emphasize this point, the earliest needleworkers were most likely people of color.

In her master's dissertation, "Myth: Black People Don't Knit," artist and activist Lorna Hamilton-Brown observes that in books on

knitting history, authors moved quickly from knitting's origin story to its emergence in Europe. "The fact that knitting is believed to have started in Egypt is often quickly passed over. Its western roots seem to be more valued."

Knitting did make its way west, and as it spread through Europe, knitted items became fashionable and critical to local economies. To meet the demand for knits—and control this lucrative market—all-male knitting guilds sprang up. These were closed meritocracies that required years of training to enter. The guilds owned production of luxury knitted items, setting prices and wielding political power. Master knitters, who controlled the guilds, were like well-heeled union bosses, holding sway over organizations that took knitting to dizzying levels of skill and prestige.

In England, Parliament passed the Cappers Act of 1571, declaring that everyone above the age of 6, with some exceptions, had to wear on Sundays and holidays "a Cap of Wool knit, thicked and dressed in England, made within this Realm, and only dressed and finished by some of the Trade of Cappers, upon pain to forfeit for every Day of not wearing three Shillings four Pence."

Queen Elizabeth I, who personally favored imported Spanish silk stockings, even denied William Lee, the inventor of an early knitting machine called the stocking frame, a patent because she worried it would eliminate jobs. In this case, a machine-knit sock wasn't just something to lose in the laundry, it was of deep economic concern.

A KNITTERS' REVOLUTION?

In the American colonies, colonists used their skills as political leverage against the British.



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WHEN IS A HAT NOT JUST A HAT?

After the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, many American colonists refused to buy British goods in protest. As part of this boycott, women participated in public spinning meetings in which they competed to spin, weave, and knit the most items before throngs cheering to colonial self-reliance. The British repealed the Stamp Act the next year.

Tove Hermanson wrote in her paper, "Knitting as Dissent: Female Resistance in America Since the Revolutionary War": "Those industrious women who could clothe themselves and their families in home-spun and recycled garments from head to toe were deemed 'patriots'—a term usually reserved for men." Once the American Revolution began, women made uniforms, blankets, and other necessities for the war effort, even slipping past the British to bring hastily recycled and stitched items to men on the front lines desperate for warm clothes.

But it didn't end with the American Revolution. Union and Confederate women stitched gear for soldiers during the Civil War, enjoined by public sentiment and media at the time. President Abraham Lincoln wrote in a letter to one especially prolific knitter, "Madam: Learning that you who have passed the eighty-fourth year of life, have given to the soldiers some three hundred pairs of stockings, knitted by yourself, I wish to offer you my thanks." She returned the president's letter, writing, "My labours in behalf of our gallant soldiers—I fear are some-what exaggerated."

Abolitionist and suffragist Sojourner Truth, who was born into slavery and escaped, is famously pictured with knitting in her lap, one of the images she sold to fund her speaking tours. After the war between the states ended, she taught emancipated slaves how to knit, sew, and cook so they might become financially independent.

The suffragists, too, plied their handiwork to serve the cause of women's enfranchisement, reports Katherine Durack of *Suffrage in Stitches* and *The Genius of Liberty* podcast, selling knitted stockings, "fancy knitting," and items for children. "The key thing is that these things were sold cheap, because it was women's labor expressed in needlework, which is still true today. If you knit, nobody wants to pay. Newspapers made fun of the women for doing the bazaar, but it's what they had, and everyone could participate."

Women pursuing the right to vote were also criticized for being unwomanly. To counteract these critiques, women used the needlearts for public relations purposes. Not only did Sojourner Truth counteract accusations of not being feminine enough with her lace collars and knitting; feminist activist Alice Paul had herself photographed sewing stars on a suffrage flag for the cover of *Suffragist* magazine.

The first and second world wars saw major knitting efforts, transforming the craft from something thrifty women did to clothe their families to an act of patriotism. A World War I poster pleaded with women, "Our boys need sox, knit your bit." A WWII poster asked knitters to "Remember Pearl Harbor. Purl harder."

The 1960s and '70s saw competing forces tear at the fiber arts: second-wave feminism, which generally decried domestic arts as



oppressive; and the back-to-nature movement, during which people embraced earthy endeavors like spinning, weaving, and knitting in response to rampant

consumerism and growing concerns about the environment.

In more recent years, crafters have gathered to make memorial squares for the AIDS quilt, stitched helmet liners for soldiers in the Middle East, made hats for people protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline, and produced red MAGA (Make America Great Again) beanies.

Dynamics have certainly changed since men owned knitting in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Though plenty of men and nonbinary people participate, the yarn crafts are stereotypically thought of as something women do, a supposition that on some level devalues the product, says Krista Suh, one of the architects of the pussy hat movement and author of *DIY Rules for a WTF World: How to Speak Up, Get Creative, and Change the World*. Ever marveled at the cheap price of a handmade hat or doily at a craft show? "Women's art, women's craft, women's voices, and toilet paper covers, we don't think or appreciate all the time it took to make that craft. Crafts are looked down on in the same way that women's rights are looked down upon."

"CRAFTIVISM IS THE PRACTICE OF ENGAGED CREATIVITY, ESPECIALLY REGARDING POLITICAL OR SOCIAL CAUSES. BY USING THEIR CREATIVE ENERGY TO HELP MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE, CRAFTIVISTS HELP BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGE VIA PERSONALIZED ACTIVISM."

OTHER WAYS WE COMMUNICATE WITH YARN

Today the yarnscape is a kaleidoscope of natural and synthetic fibers, dyed in countless, dazzling ways. How we spend our dollars can speak volumes for where we stand socially. Do you unravel sweaters from Goodwill and reknit them into new styles as part of a zero-waste lifestyle? Do you buy gorgeous hand-dyed from BIPOC entrepreneurs to show your allyship? Are you a locavore who only buys yarn from within your fibershed? Or are you like most of us, who mix buying intentionally with expedience?

Makers who create goods for charity are also expressing their values with the work of their hands. Welcome blankets for immigrants, hats for the homeless, scarves for foster kids, knitted breast prosthetics for mastectomy patients, bears for African children affected by AIDS—whatever the project, each donation aligns with issues the creator hopes to advance. As part of her definition of *craftivism*, a term

she helped popularize, Betsy Greer writes, "Craftivism is the practice of engaged creativity, especially regarding political or social causes. By using their creative energy to help make the world a better place, craftivists help bring about positive change via personalized activism. Craftivism allows practitioners to customize their particular skills to address particular causes."

Even if something doesn't seem politically loaded, the context can render it so. After the Tree of Life tragedy, one of the synagogue's rabbis received hate mail for saying President Trump would be welcome.

The five dozen or so afghans made by the Pittsburgh-area yarn shop were sent to the Tree of Life synagogue, dispersed to other local synagogues, and given to Jewish retirement communities and nursing homes. Natalie Belmont, who manages Yarns by Design, explains, "I feel like this was more healing for people, as opposed to being political."



She wasn't just editorial director at SoHo Publishing for years; she was my boss. Trisha Malcolm, an industry mainstay, recently moved on to new, more European pastures at Mez Crafts (parent company to many brands, including Rowan, Patons, and Schachenmayr), and I realized it was high time we interviewed her for this page.

—Erin Slonaker

ES: It's funny to interview someone I've known for so many years. But for the readers' sake, tell me the path that led you to where you are now.

TM: My mother taught me to knit when I was 4, back in the small town I grew up in, in rural Australia. I made little blankets for my dolls with lots of "yos" (holes, really) and I worked out how to knit a tiny donut. I can remember the exact shade of blue and the gray plastic needles I used. I had trouble with crochet, so I was about 7 before I got that together, and I have fond memories of my grandmother teaching me. And the purple granny bag I made back in the '70s. I became a high school teacher and taught home ec and crafts to kids—that was what really got me started on seeing knitting/crochet/sewing/making as a possible career.

ES: How did you end up the editor in chief of *Vogue Knitting*?

TM: I think it was a matter of being in the right place at the right time. Nancy J. Thomas had hired me years before, and I worked on the magazine for a year before moving on. I was working on a craft publishing project at the time the position opened up, and being in the same building helped. As did my passion for *VK* and for knitting. At first I said no, because I thought I could never even do the job. It took a lot of convincing before I said yes.

ES: What is it about this industry that drew you to it, and what keeps you in it?

TM: It's the making. I'm a lifelong maker and completely understand the satisfaction and value

that comes from making something. I love the process just as much as the end product. It's that passion for making that got me here in the first place, and it's the constant stimulation that's kept me here. Being in knitting is about constantly studying, because there's always something new to learn, there's always a new influencer who's bringing something amazing to the table. And I think you stay for the people, too. I've been incredibly honored to meet so many immensely talented people. We're a group who value creativity and have a passion for what we do, whether we are designers, yarn makers, writers, sheep farmers, business owners, travelers, or employees in the shipping department.

// [OUR INDUSTRY IS] A GROUP WHO VALUE CREATIVITY AND HAVE A PASSION FOR WHAT WE DO. //

ES: I'm curious about your current role. This job didn't exist before you got it, right? What are you doing for the various brands you work with?

TM: I have the coolest job! I work with the brands under our company umbrella to come up with strategies and projects that will help grow them and their influence, and drive revenue. Each brand has vastly different needs, and it's been so interesting to get to know them all, and to work with some very talented and passionate people. I travel a lot, which I really enjoy, and work mainly with teams in the UK and Germany, as well as in the United States. I'm challenged and learning so much.

ES: Do you still get immersed in the fashion side of things, or is it more about yarn nowadays?

TM: Both. But in different ways. Yarn brands all need to be aware of fashion in some way, since we're an industry that's primarily about making things we wear. For all yarn brands, it's about determining where you sit on the fashion spectrum. Think of it in retail terms; many brands sit between Walmart and Chanel, and it's about pinpointing where you fit and who you are targeting. [At *VK*] we were more often driven by fashion and trends, but in yarn companies, the product comes first. This is my first foray into looking at how yarns are selected, and it's a fascinating process. When you have the right yarn, you then work out how to use it to show it at its best, and look to fashion and what people are wearing. In the knitting world we have a third driver, and that's what people are actually making, like the shawl trend, for example, which is not really driven by either yarn or fashion.

ES: The industry has gone through dips and peaks; how do you view the next five years?

TM: When I first became editor in chief of *Vogue Knitting* we were in a similar place to where we are now. It was a down time in the industry, sales were bad, companies were going out of business,

and there was a certain amount of anger, probably driven by disappointment and fear of where this was all going. Eventually it all settled down and so many good things came out of that low time; when there was just a little bit of growth again, the mood changed. I think we are going to sit where we are, looking back at all the disruption that's taken place, for another year or so, and then I think we're going to start to grow together again and create a new industry with a new way of doing business that's not like we've seen before.

ES: You have fostered the careers of so many people in your time in the industry. How do you find talent? What's your trick for pairing personalities with roles?

TM: With designers, it's their product that speaks for them, so spotting talent there is the easiest, whether they are new designers or if they've been doing this for their whole career. In terms of job roles, it's experience. Now, I can tell usually in one interview if it's going to work or not. In all honesty, this industry attracts people who are talented and work really hard.

ES: You resurrected *Yarn Market News* after it lay fallow for several years. What are you most proud of with this publication?

TM: I wasn't in the industry when *YMN* was first published. One day I found a file of old issues and was blown away. I went straight to my boss and said, "We need to do this again!" The industry was in a growth mode, with new stores opening all over the country, and new yarn companies. Mary Colucci suggested Karin Strom as the perfect editor. Concepting the magazine was fun; we came up with something that for so long was important for the industry, in a newsy format with a mix of short and long articles, and the clever covers Karen and Joe [Vor, our creative director] drove. I was really proud of our team. Then we launched the *YMN* business conferences, and finding incredibly talented speakers from outside our industry brought something fresh and exciting to our knitting business owners. Seeing the value this conference gave was incredible. I'm sad this is *YMN*'s last issue, but our industry has changed so much that it's not as necessary as it once was. I'm excited, though, to see what someone comes up with in the future to provide professional connection within the yarn world.

ES: You travel so much now for your job, back and forth from Brooklyn to Europe. What's in your travel knitting bag?

TM: Right now I'm on a hat kick—I've just finished a great one in Rowan's Sultano for my niece, and I'm knitting a Martin Storey design for her husband now in Moordale. Hats are so perfectly portable!

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